

LIBRARY
UNIVERSITY OF
CALIFORNIA
SAN DIEGO



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2007 with funding from
Microsoft Corporation

OLD-WORLD ESSAYS

OLD-WORLD ESSAYS

BY R. L. GALES AUTHOR OF
STUDIES IN ARCADY AND
A POSY OF FOLKSONGS,
ETC. PUBLISHED IN LONDON
BY DANIEL O'CONNOR, 90
GREAT RUSSELL ST. 1921

To
H. W. MASSINGHAM

CONTENTS

	PAGE
ON PEASANT CHRISTIANITY	7
THE BIBLE AND POPULAR LANGUAGE AND TRADI- TION	17
ON THE SIBYLS	26
THE LORE OF THE VILLAGE CHURCH.	38
'THE FOOL OF CHRIST'	49
ONE SIDE OF A DISCUSSION	60
THE BENEDICTINES	71
CONTINUITY	81
A TRACT AND A WINDOW	93
THE WAY OF MARY.	103
HEATHEN FOLK-LORE	112
ROUND ABOUT REIMS	122
CARDINAL BEMBO'S VILLA	134
A DEBATE OF THE OLD WORLD	144
THE ASPECTS OF THINGS	153
HISTORY AND LIFE	161
POEMS, BAD AND GOOD	169

CONTENTS

	PAGE
RUSSIAN FAIRY TALES	178
TWO CORNISH FRESCOES	188
STREET GAMES, OLD AND NEW.	197
A GOSSIP ABOUT SURNAMES	207
ON THE VULGAR TONGUE	219
LANGUAGE MECHANICAL AND VITAL	232
SOME COUNTRY SAYINGS	241
THE SENSE AND NONSENSE OF RHYME	254
ON GETTING BACK INTO THE PAST	273
THE SENSE OF THE PAST	284
LIBER ALBUS	292
A CHILDHOOD IN COCKAYNE	302
AN ITALIAN JOURNEY	312

ON PEASANT CHRISTIANITY

MR. STEPHEN GRAHAM, in his book on the Russian pilgrimage to Jerusalem, quotes a very interesting example of what we may call the peasant folk-lore of Christendom. On Easter Day an old man who had made the pilgrimage with him from the heart of Russia said to Mr. Graham :—

“ Christ is risen, and it is Easter, but not like the Easter when He rose. How the sun blazes ! All Jerusalem is dry and will remain dry, but then it was fresh, and there was rain, such rain ! You know there came a fruitful year after His death. No one had known such a summer. Everything seemed to yield double or treble increase, and there was a freshness which seemed to promise impossible things.”

‘ The old man spoke of it,’ Mr. Graham adds, ‘ as a well-known fact as vividly remembered as if it had happened yesterday.’ To a corporate faith and love indeed two thousand years is but a very little time. It may very fairly be argued that a thread transmitting this memory and this knowledge runs through the centuries from the first Easter Day, vanquishing time as a telegraph wire conveying

its messages vanquishes space. It is conceivable that the minds of the first Christians received an exact reflection of the events of the sacred story with all the circumstances and details accompanying them, and that this reflection has been retained and transmitted to all generations of the faithful. Visionaries like Sister Catharine Emmerich may in some unknown way have gained an access to this stored-up memory. Be that as it may, the folk-lore of all Christendom connects rain with Ascension Day. Rain falling on that day has everywhere a peculiar sacredness. It is as though the cloud which received Him out of their sight broke in a gentle spray of blessing upon the earth He left. All that summer the earth would be green and fresh and flowery with His blessings and farewells and the last imprints of His feet.

Any one who has any acquaintance with the peasant-mind and habit of thought knows how the remembrance of such a thing as this would be treasured up and handed on. Country people talk of the weather of by-gone years, and they connect it with the turning-points of their own lives, the weddings

ON PEASANT CHRISTIANITY

and funerals, the notable events, the battles and coronations, the people who have been talked about and made a stir in the world. They will tell you about 'Hot Wednesday,' they will argue about which was the year of 'the great snow.' They talk of these things on summer evenings and by winter fires. Peasants are never really interested in anything they have not themselves seen and known, some fact or event they themselves have witnessed and been concerned in. Their whole minds are occupied with concrete things, the tangible, the visible, the known, the loved, the remembered. For the abstract, the unknown, the distant from their own homely and familiar world, they care nothing. The faith of Christendom started with a group of Jewish peasants who had gathered round a Person like themselves whom they felt to be more than themselves. Its starting-point was the figure of the carpenter whose father and mother they knew. Never leaving the personal, never leaving the concrete, dwelling on it, living in it, they came to believe that what they had seen with their eyes, what they had looked upon and their hands had

OLD-WORLD ESSAYS

handled was that which was from the beginning, that eternal life which was with the Father and had been manifested unto them. Christianity began, not with theories and abstractions, but with events and persons, and their effect and influence on the real world and on human life. The great Peasant Figure, the life and teaching so full of the peasant simplicity and charity, the peasant reality and nearness to the earth and everyday life, so removed from the academic, the unreal, the conventional, became for them one with what was highest and most remote, and brought them the clear knowledge and vision of unknown invisible things. How they would talk of all this, those ploughmen and vinedressers of whom St. Jerome tells us, the whole scenery and setting of the Story, what the weather was like, the cold wind of Good Friday, the soft, warm rain of Ascension Day, the wealth of blossom and fruit all that year. To St. Paul's Gentile converts all these things would be further off, not so homelike. But pilgrims coming to the Holy Places would hear the stories, would bring them home, say, to Byzantium, and

ON PEASANT CHRISTIANITY

from thence they would in time be carried to the most distant steppes and plains of Russia, where peasants have dwelt on them and repeated them from that day to this. It has been argued with a strange perversity that the true genius of Christianity is abstract rather than concrete, that it is concerned with ideas rather than facts, that its characteristic statement is 'God is a Spirit' rather than 'the Word was made Flesh.' In one word it is what is called a 'spiritual religion.' Such a Christianity, whatever its other advantages, can at any rate never be a present religion. Peasant piety, all the world over among heathen or Christian men, is a piety of times and places bound up with domestic pieties and charities with household lares and penates, with the course of the seasons and the labours of the fields. A peasant Christianity must of necessity be a religion of icons. Christianity in itself the revelation of the Icon of all icons, 'the Image of the Invisible God.' By it men are drawn by visible things to the love of invisible good. Dante tells us of the country man who from the depth of some far-off barbarous province like Croatia comes to

see the Veronica likeness at Rome and while he gazes upon it keeps repeating in his thought 'Do I indeed see here Thy likeness, Lord Jesus, my true God?' The peasant indeed has the mind of a little child. The writer was reminded of this very strikingly one Christmas Day. We had been singing the usual hymns in Church about the lowly cattle-shed, the manger and the beasts. At the festal meal which followed a little boy of seven with a sensitive, wistful face suddenly and unexpectedly exclaimed as he looked up from his mince pie, 'I wonder if there's a splinter of the manger anywhere?' On another occasion he broke out with 'I should so love to have a piece of the True Cross.'

In this Christianity of the peasant and the child comes a sense of the transfiguration of common things, an enhancement and enrichment of the everyday world. A well is the Well by which Mary sat at the Annunciation; a stable into which the farm boy goes in the cold winter morning with food for his beasts, the actual stable with its cold and darkness and uncleanness is the place of the Great Birth; a strange sacred shadow falls on the

ON PEASANT CHRISTIANITY

carpenter's shop with its chips and shavings and scattered tools. Christianity has thus endowed the common world with a rare quality of romance. To a great extent this vanishes when the old detailed popular knowledge has been blurred into a featureless reverence. The mirror which has caught the exact reflection has been broken, and a land without the mysterious perpetuation of the Sacred Story is uninhabited by spiritual presences and powers. In England one feels there is very little sense of a transfiguration and consecration of common things. Heaven is something unimaginable, something infinitely distant. To the true Peasant Christianity the earth is taken up into the heavenly courts; and the pilgrim finds Heaven itself in earthly holy places.

The spirit of Christian folk-lore which is quite dead in England, and, to be fair, probably in the greater part of Western Europe, is among the Russian peasants alive and creative as ever. Christian folk-lore is always concerned with concrete, everyday things, and it effects the transfiguration of them of which we have spoken. To give an example

OLD-WORLD ESSAYS

from Italy ; it was, and probably still is, the custom in Florence to expose crickets for sale on Ascension Day, those strident summer creatures, the cicale, each in a little wicker cage. They may be seen on the stalls in the market-place by hundreds and by thousands. The origin of the custom is the legend, be it pure folk-fancy or some long-descended echo of a tale brought home by pilgrims, that as Our Lord stood on Mount Olivet amid the May grass and the flowers, a cicala leapt up with one of those astonishing leaps of theirs, and settled on His robe, and so was carried up with Him, one of the tiniest and the lowliest of earth's creatures still shrilling with its little insistent earthly voice, into the highest heaven. This little story is a parable of the whole mystery of the Ascension. It is delightful to think of the shrill earthly tinkle of this minute creature, sounding on as it is borne up through unimaginable spaces, sphere after sphere, still sounding on, mingling with the thunderous antiphons and responses of the nine choirs, till it reaches the Throne of God. With it comes all the whisper and the murmur of the earth, the hum and drone of

ON PEASANT CHRISTIANITY

winged insects, the lowing of cattle, the gossip and the mirth of summer evenings—it is the answer to earth's prayer, 'et clamor meus ad Te veniat.' Such flowers of fancy no longer spring spontaneously and naturally from the popular mind.

This art and poetry is always concerned with real things. The people are interested in life itself as they themselves live it, and as it goes on all around them. The little song, 'Si le Roy m'avoit donné,' is a perfect example of popular poetry. The carvings of medieval Cathedrals show what popular art was in its good days. The glory of Christianity is that it took the common vital human experiences, the moving earthly scenes, and made them the subject-matter of religion, the objects of devotion. It caught these things up into heaven, made men see heaven in them here. In the circle of Eternity it set the image of the Mother and Child. One has only to think of what the Nativity has been in popular art and poetry to form some idea of the intensity of the appeal it made to the common human heart. Here was something for the mind to dwell on, for the fancy to play with,

OLD-WORLD ESSAYS

for the heart to love. Here was something to talk about—no freezing, dumb-striking abstraction! ‘How he would talk when he got home,’ says Mr. Graham of the old man Dyadya, whose words we began by quoting. How they have talked and talked for two thousand years, the disciples, and the peasants and the pilgrims! The neighbours have told tales and sung songs about it around the fire on winter nights—they have gone, if not to the Holy Land, yet to some steep hill-side sanctuary near home to catch a glimpse of it in the long summer days. The Divine has come down to men—has been made accessible to them. There is a diminutive in the Gloria. ‘Gloria al Padre,’ it runs in its usual Italian form, ‘e al Figliuolo’—‘and to the little Son’—‘e al Spirito Santo.’ The sweet prattle of baby-talk is heard amid the austere eternal praise. So all earthly things are changed and transfigured and filled with a new virtue, as when at Cana the servants drew from the stone water pots and the guests’ cups overflowed with the golden and the rosy foam of the red wine and the white.

THE BIBLE AND POPULAR LANGUAGE AND TRADITION

MR. WILLIAM CANTON, in his recently published book, *The Bible and the Anglo-Saxon People* (Dent), makes what seems to us a really remarkable suggestion. Speaking of the Anglo-Saxon gleemen, whose songs were in great part paraphrases of the Latin Scriptures done into Saxon verse, he says :—

‘ One might even surmise that the influence of these poetic interpretations never died out ; on the contrary, that it persisted, just as that of the old folklore and folk-tales persists for untold generations, and became part of the everyday life and the common way of looking at things. And it may very well have happened that from these there sprang up a sort of Scripture language, which entered into the later paraphrases and translations, until a kind of folk-Bible was formed in the consciousness of the people ; and this not only stayed the inroads of a later Paganism, but went far perhaps to determine the diction in which the great English versions were afterwards made.’

This idea is, to the present writer at least,

so novel and original, and so extremely interesting, that he makes no apology for quoting a further passage to the same effect. With reference to Tindale's version, Mr. Canton says :—

‘ The linguistic changes and the consummate scholarship of three and a half centuries have altered it so little that it is computed that at least 85 per cent. of the words stand as they stood in 1523. It seems so extraordinary to find one man originating and fixing the type of Biblical translation for his successors that the question arises whether instead of originating a type, Tindale did not rather conform to type, inherit a tradition due in part to the very genius of the language, but principally due to the democratic spirit which animated poem, paraphrase and translation. All these were meant for the people, were expressed in their everyday speech. At the back of them all there was indeed a Latin text, but that common cause of resemblance does not wholly account for what may be called the Apostolic continuity in the diction of the old interpreters. Like the primitive superstitions, the folk-tales, the ballads, the proverbs, the singing games, Christian teaching, Christian legend-lore, *and the Scriptures*, were transmitted from generation to generation, and the people preserved, as children and nations in their childhood always strive to preserve, the very words in which they received them. . . . For the execution of his task, Tindale records he had before him no earlier translation to work over . . . the Wickliffite echoes in Tindale's work were no doubt sounding in the current speech of his time, and with them in all likelihood echoes from days still more remote.’

THE BIBLE AND POPULAR LANGUAGE

The Book of books, the English Bible, is thus no exception to the rule that books worth anything come out of the popular language ; they are born of it ; they rise out of it, like Venus from the sea. The modern notion of learning language from books has been most disastrous. Book-language spoken by the people is a speech of ' worlds not realized ' by the speakers. True popular language comes from the people's life, from what has been seen and touched and handled ; it reflects things. How delightful it is to listen to the unspoiled talk of old unlettered people ! When some old gaffer or gammer in the chimney-corner says ' it was dark as a dungeon,' one feels that the phrase has come down uninterruptedly from people who knew what the prison of a Norman keep was like, or at any rate had as much first-hand knowledge of it as to be able to use the threat of it with salutary effect to a recalcitrant child. A dear old lady said to the writer the other day, speaking of the excellent way in which her children had been brought up, ' If my poor husband as much as held up a finger, they were as mute as mackerel.' ' As mute

as mackerel ' is a phrase that could never have been learned from a book. In the same way that these familiar proverbs and sayings have been handed down from an immemorial past, so the characteristic phrases and turns of speech of the vernacular Bible were no new miraculous endowment conferred on the English people by Wickliffe, Tindale, Coverdale, and the rest, but go back to Cædmon's Vision and Cynewulf's songs. It is pleasant to think of those old poets, of Cædmon and Cynewulf, and, above all, St. Aldhelm of Malmesbury, the ' finders ' of English rhythms and singers of English songs, as in a true sense the far-off ' makers ' of the English Bible.

Let us pause for a moment over the winning figure of St. Aldhelm, Bishop of Sherborne, and Abbot of Malmesbury. He died in the year 709. It is good to know such men have lived in the world. As he went about his diocese, the people everywhere streamed out to meet him, and went before him, dancing for joy. It is one of the happiest tales of those old times, how on fair-days and on market-days he would stand on the bridge as a gleeman, and the passing throng would

THE BIBLE AND POPULAR LANGUAGE

stop to listen to the West Saxon songs of his own making that he sang. One sees the gathering crowd, and the children's wonder as one ballad after another would come out of his store :—

Such stories as a minstrel tells,
Unto the harp or handbells.

These ballads would be no doubt, in great part, stories from the Latin Vulgate done into English verse. No line of these songs now remains, though it is said that one of them was known in the country around Malmesbury for four hundred years after St. Aldhelm's death. Nevertheless, it may well be that these old ballads sung beneath Malmesbury Cross, or in Sherborne or Wimborne market-place, were one of the fountains from which welled up the music of the English Bible.

The people, since about the middle of the nineteenth century, have been dependent upon print, and have taken not only their language, but their history from books. The force of the popular memory, the popular tradition as really handing down a knowledge of historical events through the generations,

OLD-WORLD ESSAYS

has been thereby greatly weakened. It seems probable that a true folk-history has been submerged by the super-imposed unassimilated book-history, and has in great part disappeared. This folk-history, like folk-language and folk-religion, was a matter of remembered sights and sounds, concrete, palpable, visible, audible, an image of real things. In Dante's day the European peoples remembered, after five centuries, the story of Roncesvalles, and 'dopo la dolorosa rotta,' the terrible sound of Roland's horn. It is strange to think that in Germany a proverbial popular memory of Attila—Etzel—has been handed down in peasant speech and tradition from the sixth century till to-day. We have ourselves, again, sometimes heard Italian workmen speak of Attila in their familiar talk, obviously in a proverbial, traditional manner, not as merely airing a piece of book-learning. To come to times much nearer our own day, it is by no means a thing unknown to find people who have preserved a traditional memory of Prince Charlie and the '45. The most curious example of this folk-history which the writer ever remembers

to have come across, he heard from a nurse in early childhood, and singularly enough, again quite recently from a working woman—a charwoman, to be quite exact. The story illustrates the horror in which the memory of ‘Bloody Queen Mary’ has ever been held by the English populace. The nurse’s story was that the Queen had expressed the desire of cutting off the breasts of every English-woman who had been the mother of a child. In the version which we heard lately, in a quite different part of England, after an interval of at least forty years, the wish had been turned into an actual fact. The charwoman referred to above was volubly endeavouring to dissuade the writer from the idea of taking in a Belgian refugee. ‘Dear me,’ she said, ‘I do hope you won’t take in any of them people. You see they’re all Catholics, and I couldn’t rest at night if we had any of them in the village—they’re such bloody-minded people. I’ve heard tell that once we had a Catholic queen, and she cut the breasts off every woman in England. Her name was Queen Mary—but they always called her “the Bloody Queen”!’ It may very well be that

some passionate outburst of the despairing woman was carried abroad by the horrified lady-in-waiting who chanced to hear it, and became the basis of a popular legend, which at any rate conveys a true impression of the poor woman's wretchedness and bitter disappointment.

The mention of the unhappy Tudor queen brings us to those controversies amid which our English Bible took its final form. The poems of Cædmon and Cynewulf, the Psalters and paraphrases of Bede and Guthlac, the songs of St. Aldhelm, were purely devotional ; the Bible of the Reformation, to which all these things led up, was controversial. One may say without offence that in the religion of Protestant England there has always been a tendency to an unintelligent Bibliolatry. The very perfection and finality of the Authorized Version was conducive to this. The Spirit was imprisoned in the printed letter, and no longer 'filled the world.' What had been fluid and moving became stereotyped and frozen. In the eighteenth century, for instance, English religion had become a convention, so again in the nineteenth, after

THE BIBLE AND POPULAR LANGUAGE

the dying down of the fervour of the evangelical revival. The dancing butterfly of St. Aldhelm's songs fluttering hither and thither in free air and sunshine became a specimen in a museum, pinned to a card under a glass case ; the fragrant devotion of Richard of Hampole or Julian of Norwich was a flower pressed flat between the leaves of the English Bible. But it seems that a certain continuity of feeling has marked the English religion from the days of Bede and Alfred to those of Spurgeon and John Bright. Taine, in his *History of English Literature*, contrasting the early English sacred poems with those of the Continent, says, ' The Anglo-Saxon feeling is altogether Biblical.' It is in this Biblical character that the principle of continuity is found.

ON THE SIBYLS

WE remember some years ago looking at a collection of figures in Breton faïence representing various saints and persons of the Sacred Story exposed in a shop window at St. Malo. They were all well known enough—the Mother and Child, Adam and Eve, St. Anne, St. John the Baptist, St. Christopher—but amid all these familiar figures there was one we could not account for. The statue, which apparently represented some prophetess or priestess of the Ancient World, bore the inscription ‘Velleda.’ She had the air of being a recognized and honoured member of the family party. Since then we have from time to time interrogated any one with any knowledge of such matters whom we have happened to come across, and have consulted various books, but have never succeeded in finding any information about her. The

ON THE SIBYLS

search was, perhaps, unnecessary, as she is evidently a typical Sibylline figure. The people who raised the mysterious stones of Carnac were certainly not without Sibyls. Prophetic Druidesses were common in the most ancient Gaul. The Cathedral of Chartres, for instance, is said to stand on the spot where in the hoariest antiquity was the oracular grove and cavern of a priestess who prophesied that in the fullness of time a Virgin should conceive and bear a Son. Velleda is, no doubt, a figure incarnating and interpreting the brooding mysticism of the whole Celtic race.

Chance threw lately into our hands an old Italian book, printed in Venice in the year 1610, in which the learned author—a parish priest of the Veneto—discourses not only of ‘the lives of the holy Patriarchs and Prophets mentioned in Scripture’ but also of ‘the six ages of the world and the principal events which have happened in them, with the greatest diligence and in the manner of history.’ Among much other curious and interesting matter, he expatiates on the Sibyls. He prefaces his account of them with that

OLD-WORLD ESSAYS

text from the Psalms which runs in the Authorized Version : ' The singers go before, the minstrels follow after ; in the midst are the damsels playing with the timbrels ' (Ps. lxviii. 25). We confess that though not unacquainted with the traditional patristic and medieval mystical interpretation of the Psalms, the comment on this verse given by the worthy pievano of Carpineto is quite new to us, as well as altogether delightful. In the Vulgate rendering the verse runs : ' The princes went before joined with the minstrels in the midst of the damsels playing on the timbrels.' The ' princes,' of course, present no difficulty ; they are the Apostles, and joined with them are the minstrels ' *quelli che cantano,*' the Patriarchs and Prophets who of old time chanted the great things to be. Surrounding the central group of the Apostles and the Prophets are ' the damsels playing with the timbrels '—that is to say, the Sibyls. ' They may be said to play with timbrels,' remarks our author, ' because they prophesied singing, and all their utterances were in verse.' ' And since they lived in diverse times and different parts of the world,'

ON THE SIBYLS

he proceeds, 'David says that the Apostles stood in the midst of them.' The following is very characteristic of the medieval view of the great outside world of Heathendom before the Advent: 'And since they lived under the natural law and recognized one God, and some of them the Mystery of the Incarnation, and others looked forward to Jesus Christ and left this in writing, it may well be believed that their souls likewise ascended triumphantly into Heaven in company with that same Son of God, and that they have now in the midst of them the Apostles who more clearly preached Him of Whom they prophesied.' There was running through the heathen world an outer circle of illumination surrounding the centre and nucleus of light and knowledge. The author then goes on to say that he is going 'to narrate the lives of these illustrious ladies in conformity with the teaching of the Saints and Doctors of the Church.' These all confess that they were prophetesses, and affirm that they were Saints and are saved. The universal belief is that they were ladies full of the Spirit of God, that they denied the idols of the

Gentiles, observed perpetual virginity, and divined things to come. The Fathers themselves gave them the name of 'Sibyl,' which means 'the counsel of God.' Their prophecies were so clear that it seems they were often describing things past rather than things to be. Clement of Alexandria is mentioned in particular as quoting an unrecorded saying of St. Paul that 'in the books of the Sibyls you will find the clear and manifest knowledge of the Son of God.'

The author draws his notices of the Sibyls from the writings of St. Augustine, St. Jerome, Lactantius, and other writers of great weight. From these writers he collects particulars concerning ten whom he enumerates as follows: 'Cumea, Libica, Delfica, Persica, Eritrea, Cumana, Elespontica, Frigia, e Tiburtina.' Shakespeare, it will be remembered, speaks of 'the nine Sibyls of old Rome' (1 Hen. VI, i. 11). The first of these, the Cumean Sibyl is, of course, the Sibyl of Virgil. Justin Martyr says that she came from Babylon into Italy, and that he had seen the temple where she gave her oracles, and the urn where her ashes were preserved.

ON THE SIBYLS

Our author declares that it is certain that she spoke with Æneas when he came into Italy. She it is,

‘ quæ rupe sub ima

Fata canit foliisque notas et nomina mandat ;

Quæcumque in foliisque descripit carmina virgo

Digerit in numerum atque antro seclusa relinquit.

Illa manent immota locis neque ab ordine cedunt

Verum eadem, verso tenuis cum cardine ventus,

Impulit et teneras turbavit janua frondes

Nunquam deinde cavo volitantia saxo,

Nec revocare situs aut jungere carmina curat.’

—(*Æneid* III, 445-450.)

One has not the heart to quote an English rendering of the lines. How the very words seem pregnant and laden with all the mystery and expectation of the Ancient World—‘fata,’ ‘carmina,’ ‘virgo’ ! The light fluttering leaves whirled hither and thither by the wind in the Sibyl’s cavern are a picture of the hints and whispers, the Sibylline presage and foreboding of some great thing to be, not formed into any coherent body of doctrine, but coming and going, heard and felt here and there all over the heathen world. We ourselves think it extremely likely that the Fourth Eclogue, or something very like it, was originally written on the Sibyl’s leaves.

OLD-WORLD ESSAYS

Our pious author quotes it at large as being her work. He also says, 'from this Sibyl Virgil took verses which he put into his own poems.' The Sibyl's leaves, by the way, form one of the innumerable similes of Dante. As he comes back to earth from Paradise the Vision fades :—

' Così la neve al sol dissigilla,
Così al vento nelle foglie lievi
Si perdea la sentenza di Sibilla.'
—(*Par.* XXIII, 64-67.)

' So the snow melts in the sun—so in the wind on the light leaves was the Sibyl's sentence lost.' But some of her strange lore was gathered up and still lives in the fourth Eclogue. Modern critics and commentators have supposed that Virgil had some knowledge of the writings of the Hebrew Prophet Isaiah ; but is it not at least as likely that both Isaiah and the Sibyl, or, for the matter of that, Isaiah and Virgil himself, were in touch with the same primal source of inspiration ?

It would be tedious to follow our author through his detailed notices of the lives and prophecies of the ten Sibyls. One other at least is worthy of a place beside the Sibyl of

ON THE SIBYLS

Cumæ. This is the Sybilla Erythea. Just as the Cumean Sibyl is the Sibyl of the fourth Eclogue, so she is the Sibyl of the Dies Iræ. Strabo, Appolodorus, Eusebius, all speak of her. The latter records some Greek verses of hers of which the initial letters placed together form the words: Jesus Christ the Son of God the Saviour. St. Augustine, in his book of *The City of God*, gives in Latin her sentence concerning the end of the world. It may not be without interest to quote it here :—

‘ In sign of judgment the earth will be bathed with sweat, and the Eternal King will descend from heaven to judge all flesh and all the world. The faithful and the infidels will alike see God. . . . The souls of men clothed in their own flesh will suddenly appear to be judged, and all flesh will tremble. Men will cast away their idols and images, and all their riches : and suddenly a great fire will burn the earth, the air, and the sea, and penetrate even to the gates of the narrow prison of Hell. This fire will do no harm to the saints, but for the guilty will begin a burning that will never cease. Then will be manifested all sins, however hidden they have been. Then will be published and seen in the light the works done in darkness, and whatever each man has hidden in his heart. Then will be sorrow, and weeping, and gnashing of teeth, the light will fail, the sun and the stars will be darkened, the moon will lose her brightness. The valleys will be exalted, and the mountains will be laid low. . . . There will be no ships on the sea, the earth will be burned by the fire from heaven, the

OLD-WORLD ESSAYS

rivers and fountains will be consumed. There will sound a trumpet from heaven, with a terrible and fearful sound, and the earth will open. . . . All, even the kings of the earth, will appear before the Majesty of God, and they will be rewarded who are signed with the sign of wood.'

This is the prophecy alluded to in the first lines of the great hymn :—

‘ Dies iræ dies illa,
Solvat sæclum in favilla,
Teste David cum Sibylla.’

The seventeenth-century Gallican reformers of the Liturgy omitted the reference to her, changing the line into :—

‘ Crucis expandens vexilla.’

This was probably due to the Jansenist tendency to deny all light or grace to the heathen world, akin to the Protestant rationalism with regard to the marvellous not contained in Scripture. It is to be regretted that no English version of the hymn preserves the reference to her with the exception of Crashaw's :—

‘ Hear'st thou, my soul, what serious things
Both the Psalm and Sibyl sings ? ’

It is of the Samian Sibyl that the well-known story is told of her offering her nine books of sentences to the King of Rome, Tarquin the Proud, and asking for them the sum of three

ON THE SIBYLS

hundred gold pieces. When he refused she burned three of them and offered the remaining six for the same sum. Upon his ridiculing her and calling her mad, she burned three more and made the same demand for the last three. Thereupon the King, thinking some great mystery must be contained therein, gave her what she asked and caused the precious books to be placed in the Capitol. It was there that all the Sibylline books were preserved and held in high veneration. They perished in the great conflagration A.U.C. 671. Five years later a Commission was appointed to visit Cumæ, Erythea, and the other oracular places, to collect the still extant prophecies, which were formed into a new Sibylline volume. This book profoundly influenced the whole Middle Ages. Besides the ten canonical and authoritative Sibyls, there were many other prophetesses greatly venerated in the Ancient World, such as Cassandra, the daughter of Priam, Mantis, who gave its name to Mantua, the city of Virgil, and Velleda, of the Armorican woods.

To the present writer there appears nothing unreasonable in the idea of the Sibylline

OLD-WORLD ESSAYS

prophecies. At such a time as the present it is a consoling thought to reflect that however many individuals may perish, the soul of mankind, what the Ancients called the Muse, is uninjured and untouched. It is, indeed, indestructible. No human thought or idea or imagination perishes or can perish. The individual originates nothing, but receives the inspiration belonging to humanity from the first, and called forth at its appropriate time. It may well be that if there are but a few at any given time capable of receiving it they do so with a greater intensity, just as one or two heirs of a fortune receive more than they would if it were dissipated among a great number of claimants. The soul of the world is prophetic; it dreams of things to come. But it dreams of the realization of some idea which has been with it from the first: It seems probable that the idea of a Divine Incarnation is innate in mankind. This idea may have impressed itself if darkly and obscurely, yet profoundly, upon the minds of the Sibyls, just as the impressions of Nature stamped themselves profoundly on the great brooding mind of Wordsworth.

ON THE SIBYLS

There seems no doubt that there was an age-long adumbration of this idea all over the heathen world. The Sibylline verses would be treasured as enshrining a mystery not understood but dimly venerated :—

‘ La dottrina che s’asconde
Sotto ’l velame degli versi strani.’

—(*Inf.* IX, 62.)

The mystery, after all, is in the hidden secret source of the sacred fountain, not in the chasm or orifice through which it issues from the earth. The Sibylla Tiburtina prophesied amid the roar of the cascades of Tivoli, and as she chanted, like the damsel with the dulcimer in the poet’s vision, the river of all the expectation and desire that had traversed the whole Ancient World foamed and fell in the thunderous and majestic volume of the Sibylline cataract.

THE LORE OF THE VILLAGE CHURCH

WHAT a wealth of fascination is to be found in every detail of an ancient village church ! The present writer can lay claim to no very profound knowledge of ecclesiology, but he has been from earliest childhood a lover of churches, and Mr. Ditchfield's interesting little volume, *The Village Church* (Methuen), has recalled many memories, and set him thinking of many things. Everything about an ancient church is full of interest. Take, for instance, its site. In the very beginning of his book Mr. Ditchfield says, speaking of his imaginary village sanctuary :—

‘ It was probably built on a site that was regarded with religious awe long before Christianity came to our shores.’

On reading this, the writer's mind at once went back to the little church at Wanborough, on the north side of the Hog's Back, midway between Guildford and Farnham, which it was his lot to serve for twelve years. Speaking of this place, Kemble says in his *History of the Saxons in England* :—

THE LORE OF THE VILLAGE CHURCH

‘Wanborough, a spot in the North Downs, has probably been a sacred place of every religion ever introduced into Britain.’

The Church is built hard by a never-freezing spring. Some natural feature of this kind often determined the choice of the original sacred spot, in this case, hallowed successively by Druid stones, a Roman altar, a temple of Woden (whence the name Wodensborough, Wanborough), a little Christian church.

With regard to the orientation of Churches, is the ‘doctrine of the regions’ concerning which that unrivalled mythologist, R. S. Hawker, writes so learnedly, an echo of Celtic mysteries? He says :—

‘The East is the realm of the oracles, the especial gate of the Throne of God ; the West the domain of the people, the Galilee of all nations ; the South, the land of the mid-day, is sacred to things heavenly and divine ; but the North is the devoted region of Satan and his host ; the lair of the Demon and his haunt.’

‘Midi,’ ‘mezzogiorno,’ ‘Mit-tag,’ and the like are names for ‘the South’ in various European languages. The Russian word for ‘the North’ is equivalent to ‘mid-night.’

‘In some of our ancient churches,’ Hawker adds, ‘over against the font and in the

OLD-WORLD ESSAYS

northern wall there is an entrance named "the devil's door"; it was thrown open at every Baptism at the Renunciation for the escape of the Fiend; at every other time it was carefully shut.' There is a door of this kind in the writer's present church, Gedney, in Lincolnshire. The mystical reasons for worshipping towards the East are three. Man looks toward Paradise, from which he was exiled, and to which he desires to return. Our Lord on the Cross looked westward, and we look towards Him. This is much insisted upon by mystical writers. Fray Luis de la Palma, if we remember, says, writing in the sixteenth century, that 'He looked toward the Kingdom of Spain, where His religion was so greatly to flourish and prevail.' Again, the Apostles at Our Lord's Ascension looked eastward, and we look thither for His second coming. The dead are laid in the earth facing eastward, but by what has always seemed to us personally a very uncanny bit of symbolism, priests are laid in the grave with their faces toward the west. They have to rise facing their flocks. In churches at Rome and elsewhere, based

THE LORE OF THE VILLAGE CHURCH

on the model of the Basilica, the sanctuary is at the west end of the church, and the priest celebrates standing at the west of the altar.

Boys run in and out of the spacious porches of our village churches and wayfarers rest on the stone seats at their sides, as we have all done sometimes on long walks on summer evenings. But in the earliest days of Christianity and in medieval times the porch was a living part of the whole living fabric. It was all astir with people coming and going upon the business of faith. In the early church the porch was, of course, the place of catechumens and penitents ; here was the font (when it was moved into the church it was placed near the door) ; here, too, after the service the faithful ate at a common table. In Eastern monasteries this table is found in the porch at the present day. In the East, instruction is still given to catechumens in the porch, and penitential services held there ; but its principal use is as the place in which stand those who ask alms of the people entering the temple, in Russia with the words, ' For Christ's sake.' The upper storey of the porch in many village

OLD-WORLD ESSAYS

churches was a room called the 'parvise.' In later times this was often used as school-room. Every old man and woman who at the present time knows how to read in the writer's parish learned to do so in the parvise of Gedney Church. From the piscina in the wall it evidently in the old days contained an altar. At the 'restoration' of the church a few years ago this parvise was most unfortunately destroyed. The now useless staircase that led up to it is choked with odds and ends. In the neighbouring church of Long Sutton the very fine parvise is used at the present time as a library. By the way, in Breton village porches there are always statues of the Apostles, by whose preaching the faithful enter the church. Each holds a scroll on which is inscribed that article of the Creed which he contributed to the form which they jointly drew up on the day of their dispersion to teach all nations. 'The Division of the Apostles,' the fifteenth of July, our St. Swithin, is a great feast day in Catholic Germany.

The door, again, is a very sacred feature of the church. Still talking of Gedney, this

THE LORE OF THE VILLAGE CHURCH

church possesses a magnificent ancient door. It bears the inscription, 'Pax Christi sit huic domui et omnibus habitantibus in ea; hæc requies nostra,' and has let into it a carved ivory representation of the Crucifixion. The reader will remember Mr. Ruskin's delight in the soaring doorways of cathedrals, and his detestation of the mean little slits through which one has so often to creep into them. We ourselves confess that few things of the kind cause us such irritation as the use of these wretched apertures while the great door is kept shut. The door of the church should be flung wide open. The symbolism of the door is obvious. There are churches in which the door (the door itself, that is, without the tympanum) is just six feet high, to quote R. S. Hawker, 'the exact height of Our Saviour's earthly form.' One may study Christian symbolism all one's life, and yet be always coming upon something new, and yet so obvious that one is amazed that it never struck one before. Mr. Ditchfield, for instance, says: 'When the door is made double, it is meant to signify Our Lord's two natures, the human

OLD-WORLD ESSAYS

and the divine.' This is quite new to us. All this inexhaustible play of symbolism, like so much folk art and poetry, comes from that most fruitful definition at Nicæa.

We enter the church, and perhaps the first thing we see is a holy-water stoup, no longer used. The idea of some sort of purification before worship is a very ancient one. 'I will wash mine hands in innocency, and so will I go to thine altar,' says the Psalmist. And 'Let us draw near, having our bodies washed with pure water,' says the writer of the Epistle. At the present day, in Russia in winter the peasants take a little snow in their hands as they go into church. There is one feature of the church, the disappearance of which we never cease to sigh over, that is, the singers' gallery, now no more, at the west end. This recalls, not ancient and sacred symbolism, but humanist and secular ages, like the eighteenth century. We grieve over the deposed village musicians. We remember one old man in particular, who resented bitterly the abolition of the village orchestra in which himself had been wont to perform on an instrument

THE LORE OF THE VILLAGE CHURCH

known as the 'Old Serpent.' The loss of these rustic minstrels, in our own opinion, is ill compensated by a troop of anticking choirboys in surplices in the chancel, whose principal activity often seems to be the tearing up of hymn-books and chant-books, as a puppy tears up a cushion or a mat.

However, the gallery in the west end must have inconvenienced the ringers. Volumes might, of course, be written on the bells, and the tower in which they are housed. One likes to think of Boston stump, for instance, being in reality a light-house. It is a curious instance of the modern Anglican stiffness and inadaptableness, that we have known a clergyman object to one of the bells in his church being used as a fire-bell. This is a reaction from the eighteenth-century freedom, under which the bells were sometimes rung to celebrate the victory of the squire's race-horse. This last does not shock the present writer so much as it does many good people ; but at any rate the bells should be surely at the disposal of the parishioners for all manner of useful service, or legitimate rejoicing. There is a curious dif-

OLD-WORLD ESSAYS

ference in the tone of the inscriptions on pre-Reformation and post-Reformation bells. In the same way, after the sixteenth century, on tomb-stone inscriptions the old humble prayers for mercy were replaced by pompous laudations of the virtues of the deceased.

Many village churches contain very interesting fonts. There is a most curious and beautiful seventeenth-century font-cover, for instance, at Terrington, in Norfolk. Much folk-lore has gathered about christening. We remember a kind-hearted old clergyman of nearly ninety, who always insisted on using warm water for the babies he christened. Two curious pieces of furniture are often found in Breton churches, a fire-place and a kettle for heating the water used in baptism. This is no doubt due to mystical rather than humanitarian reasons. In the same way warm water is mingled with the chalice in the East.

But who are we that we should talk of fonts, and rood-screens, carvings, and brasses, and stained glass? The niches in our village church are empty, though the emblems of the Passion may be seen high in the roof. In a Cambridgeshire church known to us,

THE LORE OF THE VILLAGE CHURCH

the three empty niches above the west door were filled by the late rector with statues respectively of the Mother and Child, King Edward VII, and Bishop King. From most village churches the saints are gone, but the monsters and grotesque heads remain. According to R. S. Hawker, one of these impish faces was known to our medieval forefathers as 'the grin of Arius.' The arch-heretic is represented as putting his tongue out with a scornful laugh at the Council of Nicæa. When Hawker goes on to say that this phrase has been handed down to our own days, and intimates that it was in common use in Morwenstow, we take leave to doubt. To say nothing of his deception, practised on Macaulay in the matter of the Trelawney ballad., we remember that he was firmly convinced that 'an authentic signature of the Enemy of Mankind' was preserved in the library of All Souls' College at Oxford, and ceaselessly importuned the Warden and Fellows for permission to inspect it.

Our village churches were often enlarged from time to time, and grew with the centuries. At Gedney there are three levels,

Early English, Pointed, and Perpendicular. A magnificent Perpendicular clerestory is the crown and glory of the edifice. This church has fifty-three windows in all, but with the exception of the fragments of a very ancient Tree of Jesse pieced together in one window, there is no stained glass. Perhaps the ancient glass was buried in the days when ill hands were on the church, and will some day emerge as treasure trove.

In the symbolism of a Church the nave represents earth, the chancel Heaven. They are divided by the screen, the emblem of Death, no longer a dead, blank wall, the books say, but open and beautiful and surmounted by the Cross. In Old England the rood-beam was called the candle-beam. At Wanborough six big candles always burned on it on festival days. The old symbolists say that the Rood should be placed exactly in the centre of the church, the Tree of Life in the midst of the Garden. After the chancel-gate there should be no more representation of the Suffering of Our Lord, because He has passed through the grave and gate of death, and dieth now no more.

‘ THE FOOL OF CHRIST ’

Jacopone da Todi ; A Spiritual Biography. By Evelyn Underhill. (Dent. 16s. net.)

THE façade of the Cathedral of Orvieto, all gold and white marble, with its gleaming mosaics, itself a page of an illuminated missal, is a sort of frontispiece to the book of the life of medieval Umbria. In the empty, grass-grown streets of the town one can call up the figures that once thronged them. Mingling with the rest of the thirteenth-century crowd would be here and there the friars minor, the brethren of the second order of St. Francis, as Dante saw them. He says :—

‘ Taciti, soli, e senza compagnia
N’andavam, l’un dinanzi e l’altro dopo,
Come frati minor vanno per via.’

—(*Inf.* XXIII, 1-3.)

Going about the streets of the Umbrian towns, any day between the year 1278 and the year 1293, we might so have seen the

great Italian poet, Fra Jacopone da Todi. 'The great Italian rhymers,' perhaps it would be better to call him, using the term not in contrast to the word 'poet,' but as indicating a certain kind of poet whose mastery of his art had attained an excellent and super-eminent degree. His lauds were, of course, in the *volgare*; but the loveliest of Latin rhymes, the 'Stabat Mater Dolorosa,' is attributed to him, it seems with a very high degree of probability. One doesn't see who else could have written it. It is above all the work of a rhymers, of some one delighting in rhyme. Surely, too, it is the most Franciscan of hymns. How often have the words been sung since Jacopone's day by simple people making that humble but tremendous journey of the Way of the Cross :—

' Sancta Mater, istud agas,
Crucifixi fige plagas
Corde meo valide.'

Right up to the Renaissance, of course, Latin was the language in which people wrote books ; people who wrote the most exact and lucid Latin rambled and babbled in their own vernacular. They seem to have had no

control of it. One does not wish to suggest that Jacopone does this in his vernacular poems, but they, at any rate, have not the perfect lucidity of the ‘Stabat Mater.’ Talking of this, by the way, Miss Underhill calls the companion hymn, ‘Stabat Mater Speciosa,’ a ‘tame and servile imitation,’ and refuses to admit that Jacopone had anything to do with it. We are very doubtful as to this judgment. These are the only two Latin poems which Jacopone is suspected of having written.

Miss Underhill’s book is of great value not only as introducing Fra Jacopone, on whom, as she says, ‘very little has been written in English,’ to English readers, but still more and especially for the collection of his poems, hitherto so little accessible, grouped in three sections, illustrating the three stages of his spiritual biography. His mystic journey can thus be clearly made out from the poems alone. This is a document of the most extreme interest. We cannot think that Mrs. Theodore Beck’s renderings are very inspired. There is a want of definiteness with regard to Christian things. For in-

stance, where Jacopone says of the Ascending Saviour :—

‘ Con segni di vittoria al Padre redisti,’

Mrs. Beck translates :—

‘ Back to thy Father crowned with victories.’

The ‘ segni di vittoria ’ are, of course, the Prints of the Nails and the Spear. Again, she renders ‘ officio divino ’ as ‘ Mass,’ though the poet himself describes it in the next line as ‘ terza e nona e vespertino.’ Of course, the task is one of extreme difficulty, and we have reason to thank Mrs. Beck for her gallant endeavour to grapple with it.

The present writer is perhaps rushing in where higher intelligences fear to tread, but he is tempted to quote two stanzas from the lovely poem ‘ Amor di caritate,’ and then attempt a rendering of them. They will, at any rate, give a sample of what Jacopone had to say and the way he said it :—

‘ Fuoco nè ferro non li può partire,
Non se divide cosa tanto unita ;
Pena nè morte già non può salire
A quella alteza dove sta rapita ;
Sotto sè vede tutte cose gire ;
Ed essa sopra tutto sta gradita ;

‘THE FOOL OF CHRIST’

Alma, co se salita
A posseder tal Bene ?
Cristo, da cui te vene,
Abbraccial con dolzore.

‘Già non posso vedere creatura,
Al Creatore grida tutta mente,
Cielo nè terra non me fa dolzura,
Per Cristo amore tutto è fetente ;
Luce di sole sì me pare oscura,
Védendo quella Faccia respendente ;
Cherubin sou niente.
Belli per insegnare.
Serafin per amare.
Chi vede lo Signore.’

The following is as nearly as possible a literal rendering of the above and the metrical scheme is preserved, though the lines of the first part of each stanza have only ten syllables and not twelve as they should have :—

‘Nor fire nor sword can ever separate
One thing like this united utterly ;
Nor pain nor death can mount unto that state
To which I have been caught to dwell with Thee ;
Beneath me moves the World and Time and Fate
And I above them sing in ecstasy,
Set in eternity ;
Soul, how didst thou ascend
To such Good without end ?
By Christ Whose grace and love upon me was out-
poured.

OLD-WORLD ESSAYS

' I can no longer the Creation see ;
To the Creator cries out all my mind ;
Nor sky nor earth give sweetness unto me
Since in Christ's love all my delight I find ;
Light of the sun for me might darkness be
Since on me that resplendent Face hath shined ;
As an idle wind
Are the flaming Cherubin,
Nothing are the Seraphin,
Spirits of skill or love to who 'sees Thee, O Lord.'

The sayings of the great Saints and Doctors, the ' Who shall separate us from the love of Christ ? ' of St. Paul, the ' Thou hast made us for Thyself and our heart is restless until it rests in Thee,' of St. Augustine, the ' nec lingua valet dicere, nec littera exprimere,' of St. Bernard, Jacopone takes these things and warbles them like Shelley's skylark, if not like Shelley himself :—

' O amor d'Agno,
Maggior che mar magno—'

It is the note of ecstasy. Mr. Clutton-Brock, by the way, has recently coupled together St. Francis and Shelley as examples of those who saw the Kingdom of Heaven upon earth. Perugino, who, it may be noted, was like Shelley technically an ' atheist,' was another of these heavenly-minded people. But the

‘ THE FOOL OF CHRIST ’

love of Christ never made St. Francis indifferent to the light of the sun. In this, of course, Jacopone was not Franciscan, though he represents so much of the intensest and most fervent Christianity. The Franciscans and all the art and poetry derived from them saw Christ in visible things.

The three groups of *laude* as arranged by Miss Underhill illustrate the three stages of Jacopone’s spiritual journey, the well-known mystical divisions of the Purgative, the Illuminative, and the Unitive Ways. The *laude* of the first stage were written during the ten years following his conversion—the years from 1268 to 1278, when he wandered about as a lay-preacher and became known as ‘ il pazzo di Cristo,’ ‘ the Fool of Christ ’ :—

‘ Senno mi pare e cortesia,
Empazir per lo bel Messia.’

His conversion took place at the age of forty and followed the death of the young and beautiful wife to whom he had been married a year. The *laude* of this period are revivalist hymns. The book that should be studied with them is the Methodist hymn-book. Such a hymn as ‘ Christ, Whose Glory fills the Skies ’ :

OLD-WORLD ESSAYS

‘ Dark and cheerless is the morn
Unaccompanied by Thee,
Joyless is the day’s return
Till Thy mercy’s beams I see ’

might have been written by Jacopone. The whole language and doctrine is Methodist. Conversion is the ‘ New Creation,’ the ‘ New Birth.’ He says : ‘ Lord, I do not see Thee, but I know that Thou hast changed me into another man.’ The high and dry Anglicans used to be very scornful of the reliance upon feelings attributed to the Evangelical sectaries, described by one of themselves as ‘ hanging upon frames.’ Nobody could have ‘ hung upon frames ’ more than Jacopone and his devout contemporaries. The world of thirteenth-century mystical Italy had—to talk this kind of jargon—a sense of spiritual values. It prized, for instance, almost above all things, ‘ the gift of tears.’ Without it, indeed, there must be aridity and the dust of death. The Blessed Umiliana tried to produce the gift of tears by the use of quicklime. (This seems like cheating at Patience.) The Blessed Angēla of Foligno said she was more loved by the Holy Ghost than any

woman in the Vale of Spoleto. When Jacopone, towards the end of his life, fell upon evil days and was imprisoned at Palestrina, his jailer brought him a little extra food for a consideration of eight paternosters.

In the year 1278 he became a lay-brother in a convent of the ‘relaxed’ Franciscans in his native town of Todi. The life of Jacopone, an ardent sympathizer with the ‘Spiritual’ party, as a lay-brother in a convent of the ‘Relaxati,’ was not without its difficulties, but the years spent there were his great years as a Franciscan and a poet. To them belong his most beautiful songs. Why, by the way, does Miss Underhill say that the Franciscan idea ‘that in St. Francis the life of Christ had been lived again’ ‘is to the modern mind *bizarre*, if not blasphemous’? Surely, that the life of Christ is to some extent reproduced in that of every Christian, is the essential idea of all Christianity. St. Francis was merely a great and notable example of this rule.

In his last stage Jacopone appears to have been Neoplatonist rather than Christian. ‘His meditations,’ Miss Underhill tells us,

OLD-WORLD ESSAYS

‘had become more metaphysical and less Christo-centric.’ ‘He recognized the merely symbolic and approximate character of his former religious conceptions.’ The whole question of mysticism is a vexed and difficult one. The mystics would no doubt say—if we remember right one of the seventeenth-century Quietists did say—that ‘the End being gained there was no further need of the Way.’ But one understands why mysticism has never been looked upon with a favourable eye by the Church. However, Jacopone had now entered into ‘the Darkness’ and found the ‘infigurable’ Reality. If any one ever really attained these experiences, Jacopone undoubtedly did. Whatever was to be had from them he had. In the long poem ‘Sopr’ onne lingua’ he attempts to describe this state. ‘All intellectual activity seems to be suspended,’ Miss Underhill says, ‘even self-consciousness is obliterated.’ Much of the poem may well seem dangerous doctrine. ‘That Good which is given thee, changing thee into Itself, if it allows thee, will allow Itself to fall into sin.’ To the present writer the poems of this stage are

‘ THE FOOL OF CHRIST ’

without the beauty of the earlier ones. ‘ The Dark,’ ‘ the Obscurity,’ ‘ the Void,’ ‘ the Nothingness,’ of which the mystics speak do not seem to him Christian things. The two great sources of Christian mysticism are, we suppose, the writings of Plotinus and those of St. John. The imagery of St. John, at least, one understands ; it is an imagery of light ; ‘ in Him is no darkness at all.’ But the whole current of Christian mysticism is full of the other language. The noblest and sanest of Christian mystics is the Mother Julian of Norwich. This is probably because being but ‘ a simple creature,’ a ‘ poor, silly woman,’ as she no doubt would have said, she did not feel the necessity felt by more pretentious exponents of the spiritual life of conforming to the classical models. The idea of finding God by entering into a formless void and darkness and there losing consciousness and identity, seems to the mere layman, the uninitiate wayfarer, the antithesis of what he understands by Christianity. On the festal super-frontal of the High Altar of St. Alban’s, Holborn, there used to run the embroidered legend, ‘ *Deliciæ meæ esse cum filiis hominum.*’

ONE SIDE OF A DISCUSSION

Christ, St. Francis, and To-Day. By G. G. Coulton,
M.A. (Cambridge University Press. 10s. 6d. net.)

IN venturing to discuss Mr. Coulton's book from a standpoint which is not his own (and probably not that of the majority of those who may read these lines), I should like, first, to pay tribute to the burning sincerity and intense earnestness with which he writes. He defines a Christian as 'one who is trying to follow Christ,' and his book is a passionate plea for the recognition of the modernist Christian, and even of the agnostic Christian, by their orthodox brother and the inclusion of all three in one common fold. Mr. Coulton himself feels the Christian attraction very strongly. He writes: 'The belief in a crucified carpenter has taken more men out of themselves and farther out of themselves than any other belief of which we have

ONE SIDE OF A DISCUSSION

cognizance.' This, no doubt, is the root of the matter ; this is what we want to have explained. Think of what happened ; think of the extraordinary fortune among men which befell the associates of that same carpenter, themselves fishermen, mechanics, and the like. They parcelled out the regions ; they ruled over the earth and its creatures ; they annexed the lion and the eagle. Take the first Christian building that comes to mind, say, St. John's College, Cambridge. The Gilbert Scott Church which serves as the Chapel of the College is, of course, modern Gothic ; it is conventional, frigid, imitative, what you will, but the point is it altogether belongs to St. John. You see him at all possible points of his story, at the Wedding at Cana, at the Last Supper, before the Latin Gate, at Ephesus. The whole college belongs to Saint John ; its weather-cock is an eagle. (I never remember seeing an eagle as a vane anywhere else, by the way. At Camelford there is a camel ; St. Nicholas's vanes are often ships ; but here there is his proper symbol, '*che sovra gli altri com' aquila vola.*') What gave these obscure people, the Apostles,

their hold on the imagination of mankind ?

I see that a reviewer of Mr. Coulton's book writes of 'the two great religious movements, primitive Christianity and primitive Franciscanism.' But the two things are in no way parallel. They differ, not in degree but in kind. The Franciscan movement was altogether derivative, secondary ; the Franciscans believed that there was nothing in St. Francis that was not a reflection or participation of what was in Christ. The story of the Stigmata illustrates this. '*Signasti, Domine, servum tuum, Franciscum,*' runs the versicle and response of the Franciscan Stations, '*signis Redemptionis nostræ.*' The real cleavage of opinion seems to be between those who regard Christianity as one of many 'movements' and those who look upon it as something unique. If our Lord, like everything else in the world, was simply the product of what had been in the world before Him, then there is no more to be said. Out of the indifference of Nature, which is all we know, there has come no answer to the cries and the speculations of men. But if there has been an interruption, a break in the

ONE SIDE OF A DISCUSSION

chain of sequence, something coming from the outside, here is something as miraculous as the Miraculous Birth.

Perhaps one might put the difference between Mr. Coulton's various classes of Christians by saying that they may be divided into those who look upon 'the secret of Jesus' (to use the well-worn phrase) as being His teaching, and those who look upon it as being Himself. In present-day journalism especially one finds very little intellectual apprehension (I do not mean agreement, but mere understanding) of the latter point of view. I read recently, for instance (I forget in what context, but it was some question of two things utterly dissimilar), that 'there is as much connection between them as there is between the secret of Jesus and the Holy House of Loretto.' Well, if the secret of Jesus is merely an ethical teaching, the two things may well seem as far apart as the Poles, but if, as He is reported to have said, He came 'to draw all men' not to a teaching, but to Himself, the connection is at once apparent. People wanted to see the things that He saw, to touch the things that He

touched, to be near what He had been near—one need not go to love poetry or ordinary human experience to labour the point—and the urgent and uncritical demand created the legendary supply.

Mr. Coulton's desire is that the Church should no longer insist upon miracles, even upon the supreme miracle of the Empty Tomb, as a condition of membership. A large part of his book is devoted to destructive criticism of what is known as the 'Catholic' view of the Church and the Sacraments as this is held by Anglicans and Roman Catholics, but on his own showing this is quite a secondary matter. The real stumbling block to the mind of the present day is the miraculous. He writes:—

'The Church, let us say, will do what she can, tentatively and hypothetically, to waive those claims which have gone so far to lose her the hearts of the poor. What, then, we may ask, is the weight which most impedes her race at present? Some may answer *sacerdotalism*; but this can hardly be; if you followed the reports of the Wesleyan Conference in the daily papers you will have noted that the language there was as frankly pessimistic as in the Archbishop's report. I am afraid we must go deeper still. What most separates the Churchman inside from the man in the street outside

ONE SIDE OF A DISCUSSION

is the current ecclesiastical conception of physical miracle. The multitude is slipping away from the Wesleyan, as well as from the Anglican and the Catholic. You may test this for yourselves ; in every serious religious discussion the argument will soon settle down to the question of miracles.'

Now I wish to write of Mr. Coulton with the utmost respect, but one must surely have a very academic mind seriously to contend that the Church's insistence upon the miracle of the Resurrection has 'lost her the hearts of the poor.' Speaking of the country poor, at any rate, I admit that they are apathetic, I think increasingly so ; but that they are not hostile, that they look, at any rate, with a kindly toleration on the presence of the Church in their midst, is owing to the fact that at the bottom of their hearts they believe that 'He rose again the third day from the dead.' Every clergyman in town or country knows that one of the few things that are quite unfailing in their popular appeal is the hymn 'On the Resurrection Morning,' with all the sentiments and associations connected with it. You come across the Resurrection as a living belief in unexpected places. My own very strong impression is

that if 'the people' once came to think that the story of Easter Day was not literally true they would have no further use for the Church whatever.

The fact is that Mr. Coulton's whole outlook is academic. Academic minds are interested in religion ; they are interested in Christianity even after (which is, of course, not Mr. Coulton's case) they have ceased in any sense to believe it. Mr. Coulton himself studies the reports, not only of the Church Congress but, as we have seen, of the Wesleyan Conference ; he loves going to church and attends it faithfully, though week after week he finds himself in extreme disagreement with what he hears there. He says in a pathetic passage :—

'We sit in silence Sunday after Sunday while the priest preaches in Christ's name doctrines which seem to us essentially those which He came to sweep away 1,900 years ago. We listen in silence and can only watch the Crucifix over the pulpit and wonder what Christ would say if He came to earth again.'

Many dons, agnostic or rationalist, are sons of country rectories ; they never forget the fragrance of the old paternal fields ; they

ONE SIDE OF A DISCUSSION

hear all their lives the church-bells of their home. But the great mass of men, those 'men in the street,' 'men from the trenches,' of whom we hear so much, have not these associations and memories of rectory gardens, choir schools, college chapels, and the like. Frankly, they have no interest in theology. The natural man does not like going to church. While Mr. Coulton is pondering the reports of the Wesleyan Conference he is studying Mr. Bottomley and the 'Pink 'Un.' The suppression of miracles which would enable Mr. Coulton to attend church more comfortably would, I fear, offer no additional attraction to the man in the train. At the same time I believe he has no objection to and sees no difficulty in the acceptance of Our Lord as a super-natural Person. What religious feeling he has is a vague emotion altogether derived from and founded upon this. He, too, has sentimental associations, 'what the children learn at the school, Christmas carols, the hymns rendered by the gramophone on Sunday nights.' My own feeling is that as far as the great mass of the people is concerned the dislike of miracles

is greatly overrated. Among intelligent working men there are many Secularists, of course, but they are Secularists outright. The attenuated, academic Christianity has no attraction for them, indeed is not intelligible to them. This, I imagine, will always be the attitude of unsophisticated people. The most unsophisticated, the least academic of mortals, are perhaps men of genius. Mr. Thomas Hardy is an agnostic, we know; we can imagine him as a believer in the old-fashioned sense, but hardly as a modernist. In provincial England the leaders of the local Labour movements are often keen members of Methodist or Baptist chapels, and, latterly, sometimes devout Churchmen.

Mr. Coulton quotes Dante as saying in the twenty-fourth canto of the *Paradiso* and at the hundred and sixth verse that 'if the world turned to Christianity without miracles that one miracle was so great that of it all others are but the hundredth part.' Yes, but what it turned to, what it believed in, was the miracle of the Resurrection. Mr. Coulton thinks that this did not happen, but yet that 'Christ is glorious and immortal—

ONE SIDE OF A DISCUSSION

a Spiritual King for ever and ever.' Yet—here I am sure the working men agree with me—if it did not happen, in such a world as we know, a world of the history of which the last four years are a sample, what possible proof have we of this? The Death on the Cross was not a Victory but a Defeat, just such a defeat of justice and humanity as the so-called 'Peace' imposed at Paris. To believe anything else is to believe against reason, against the evidence of the senses. I have spoken of the Resurrection (and by implication of the Incarnation) because here is the heart of the matter. Among believers in these things all other differences are merely domestic disputes and difficulties which with time and patience may be got over. I think a 'Catholic' may fairly argue that any one who accepts *ex animo* an exact scientific statement of the Incarnation has already travelled a great part of the way with him. He has got at least as far as Ephesus.

It seems likely that, if not to the academic mind, at any rate to the awakened popular mind, the attitude of the great majority of the clergy towards the war and all matters

OLD-WORLD ESSAYS

connected with it will be a greater difficulty than any question of miracles or sacerdotalism. That attitude has too often seemed a callous and brutal Paganism. To say that the secret of Jesus is not His teaching but Himself is not to say that that teaching should be rejected with insult and contempt. But by many of the clergy this is what has been done. They have bidden men speak of the Teacher with bated breath, and they have stood by consenting and applauding while those who have tried literally to carry out His precepts have been driven mad and tortured to death.

THE BENEDICTINES

Benedictine Monachism. By the Right Reverend
Cuthbert Butler, Abbot of Downshire Abbey.
(Longmans. 18s. net.)

ON the much bescribbled margin of my copy of a mystical *Commentary on the Psalms*, I find this passage taken from some unacknowledged source :—

‘ The Cave is the symbol of intercourse with God, who is the Fountain in the Cave. It is the symbol of separation from created things and of union with the uncreated Beauty and Wisdom. Martyrology is full of the Cave from the New Testament onward. It may be said that the religion of Russia was born in the dark Cave of Hilarion.’

These words are strikingly exemplified in the story of this book. The *Sacro Speco* at Subiaico, the Cave to which St. Benedict retired in the year 500, was the cradle of monasticism, as it is understood in the West. It is true that St. Benedict’s monasticism was a reaction against the ideas symbolized

OLD-WORLD ESSAYS

by the Cave. Roughly speaking, before his time a monk had been a hermit, and had aimed, at any rate, at a strictly contemplative life. The Eastern monks were often spoken of as 'athletes' from the heroic prodigies of penance they performed. This was Eastern monasticism. It is a far cry from St. Simon Stylites, say to Mabillon or the Abbot Tosti. The stately magnificence of Cluny, the library of Monte Cassino, the labours of the congregation of St. Maur, the plainsong of Solesmes, are far indeed from the inhuman squalor and solitude of the Eastern fakir. During his three years in the Cave St. Benedict turned from the ideas of the Cave to the thought of a reasonable service of God. He himself says, 'We are going to establish a service of God in which we hope we shall establish nothing harsh or burdensome.' Abbot Butler writes :—

'It may be noted, that of what may be called artificial, self-inflicted penances, the hair-shirts, chainlets, spikes, pricks and scourgings, that play so large a part in the history of asceticism, and have been so conspicuous in later medieval and modern devotional life, there is no trace whatsoever in St. Benedict's rule or in his life as told by St. Gregory.'

THE BENEDICTINES

St. Benedict's idea of monastic life was a life lived in community, not as so largely before his time, in solitude. It united the active and the contemplative life, the former being represented by works of usefulness, originally agriculture, the latter no longer by the solitary agonizing in the desert, but by the united performance of the offices of the Church. This solemn rendering of the Liturgy, known technically as the *Opus Dei*, was pre-eminently the Benedictine work. It may here be noted that the Benedictine vows included a vow of 'stability.' The monk vowed to remain not merely in the Order, but in the house in which he made his profession until death. Each Benedictine community was a family under the Abbot. The word is literally 'the Father,' St. Paul's 'Abba.'

It would be, of course, an impertinence to praise the work of the Abbot of Downside. Suffice it to say that the book is written out of a fullness of knowledge, the ripe fruit of the patient study of a lifetime. It is the book of a scholar, of a searcher of origins. In matters bordering upon controversy, though we may divine where the writer's sympathies

OLD-WORLD ESSAYS

lie, he writes always with moderation and restraint. The community over which he presides, he tells us, is an 'unreformed' congregation. Concerning this, he writes in a passage very typical of the spirit of the book :—

‘ While not for a moment questioning the reality and the value of all the numerous renewals and revivals and reforms that are so striking a feature of Benedictine history, we must yet bear in mind that it is a natural trick of panegyrists of reforms and reformers to paint in colours much too dark the general state of things when the hero appeared on the scene. I think monastic history written from the standpoint of reformers will be a picture out of perspective. At all times there has been some monastery, some congregation, some reformer in the limelight, the salt of the earth ; my knowledge of monastic history leads me to the belief that at all times there has been a background of old-fashioned houses, with good, if not showy religious observance, and real spiritual life was being lived in a quiet way outside the reform circle of the hour.’

This is the protest, humanist at bottom, say of an old-fashioned, English country parson amid the fervours of the Evangelical Revival. One gathers, indeed, that Abbot Butler regards most of the ‘ reforms ’ from time to time introduced into his Order as departures

THE BENEDICTINES

from St. Benedict, a going back to the spirit which he left behind him in the Cave.

‘The mind of St. Benedict’ is what he wants to get back to, and the test by which he judges all developments and changes, just as in a wider field Christians are often exhorted to ‘get back to Christ.’ With regard to worship, for instance, there can be no doubt that what St. Benedict aimed at was a *rationabile obsequium*. Abbot Butler asks :—

‘What were St. Benedict’s wishes as to the way common prayer should be performed? His instruction on this point is contained in a single sentence : “Let us so take part in the psalmody that our mind be in accordance with our voice.” The natural meaning of these words is that we should pay attention to the actual words we are chanting or reciting, and make our own the various succeeding sentiments of the psalms or hymns as they occur.’

It follows that the advice so often given by later spiritual writers, not to think of the words in the recitation of the Divine Office, but to fix the mind, say, on some incident of our Lord’s Passion, is ‘not in accordance with the true Benedictine tradition, going back to St. Benedict himself.’

OLD-WORLD ESSAYS

As in Christendom at large, so among the Benedictines there have been great fluctuations in the way of looking at all these things. Abbot Butler's sympathies are all with the older spirituality as St. Benedict disengaged it from the spirit of the Cave. His book contains the best and clearest account of what is meant by 'mysticism' that I ever remember to have read. Most writers on the subject are quite unintelligible. A mystic is one who by experience knows the presence of God and his union with Him. In the earlier centuries this experience was called 'contemplation.' This was something granted to the soul immediately: to quote a few sentences on the history of the matter:—

'During the sixteenth century formal "meditation" by the use of the imagination, together with elaborate thinking out of a subject, became common—the very antithesis of the old notion of contemplative prayer. And in the next century the dogmatic theologians were rising up against it; the great Dominicans, following the example of St. Thomas in his *Summa*, ignored it; the great Jesuits, as Suarez, denied its very existence. This, Dom Chapman calls "the reversal of tradition." These tendencies ran their course in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries; the emphasis is more and more laid on extraordinary manifestations, revelations, visions, ecstasies, raptures, stigmatizations, levitations, etc.

THE BENEDICTINES

Happily, the twentieth century is witnessing a strong re-action to the older traditional ways of contemplation and contemplative prayer, the prayer of loving attention to God.'

In accordance with this Abbot Butler refuses, on account of their visions and revelations, to accord a place to the four twelfth and thirteenth-century women-saints, Hildegarde, Gertrude, and the two Mechtildes, in his list of genuine Benedictine mystics. It is obvious that mysticism is not easily reconcilable with Catholicism as it is usually understood, or one is tempted to think with normal Christianity. It is in strong contrast with what one may call the Spanish Catholicism of devotions and images, of the 'Exercises' of St. Ignatius. It may seem to have a tendency to render the Sacraments and even the Incarnation itself unnecessary. The seventeenth-century Molinist controversy all turned upon this.

The last of the great medieval mystics was the Benedictine Father Augustine Baker, a copy of whose *Sancta Sophia* printed 'at Doway' in 1657, lies on my table as I write. ('Douai,' by the way, is still 'Doway' in

OLD-WORLD ESSAYS

Benedictine speech.) Father Baker's spirituality is of a very severe and lofty kind. The mind shuts out images as it gives itself to the prayer of quiet. It is all the more pleasant to read that in his account of his principal disciple, Dame Gertrude More, he 'exhibits himself in a new light and shows us a softer and more human side of him than would be expected from the austere heights of Sancta Sophia.' Dame Gertrude More's own spiritual book, called by herself *An Idiot's Devotions*, was re-christened by Father Baker *Holy Practices of a Divine Lover*. As one reads Dame Gertrude one thinks of Coventry Patmore's saying: 'There is nothing so touching as a spiritual writer.' She had an 'active' side to her, a true mystic like a great poet being generally an embodiment of common sense. It was impossible to get the better of St. Teresa, for instance, in any business transaction. Father Baker says of his disciple:—

'Even after she had entered on her spiritual course, outside the time of recollection she was hardly less active than before. All the business that the house could afford for any of its members was hardly enough

THE BENEDICTINES

to satisfy the activity of her mind. There was nothing concerning the house, great or little, but she had head or hand or both in it. None conversed more at the grate ; none wrote more letters. She willingly took on herself the duties of cellarer and the charge of the lay-sisters ; and the abbess she assisted daily and almost hourly.'

One sees her cheapening the price of firewood, assisting in the operations of the kitchen, arranging the procession on great feasts.

The Benedictines are fourteen centuries old. Abbot Butler writes with a solid, settled assurance that the religious life with its satisfactions is a real thing. And apart from that, how many excellent and noble things, buildings, music, books, have come forth from them. Their great abbeys were built on hills.

'Bernadus valles, colles Benedictus amabat,
Oppida Franciscus, magnas Ignatius urbes.'

How many things that touch the mind have attached themselves to them in the long time ! 'Swallows build about Citeaux.' Two things are most striking and delightful in Abbot Butler's book, the sense of continuity and the sense of internationalism. He writes of controversies, chapters, com-

OLD-WORLD ESSAYS

mentaries of 1690, of 1421, of 780, as of things of yesterday, or at least as things of one continuous lifetime, a present interest and concern. Again, he writes of German monasteries, German abbots, German monks of the present day, in terms of unbroken friendship and brotherhood. It may be remembered that a French Benedictine living in Germany all through the war, dedicated his edition of three newly-discovered sermons of St. Augustine to the German Chancellor. Abbot Butler has written a book of great value and interest.

CONTINUITY

A History of the Venerable English College, Rome. By
Cardinal Gasquet. (Longmans, Green. 15s. net.)

I WHO write these lines have never been in Rome. I have been at Perugia, at Assisi, at Siena, at Orvieto, but never at Rome: Orvieto is but sixty miles from the Sacred City. I was there in 1900, with a friend who had wished to pass the two or three days spent there in Rome itself. I carried my point (of seeing Orvieto instead of getting a flying glimpse of Rome) and have regretted it ever since. The theory was that one could go to Rome at any time—alack!—and that the present holiday must be given to the Tuscan and Umbrian towns. The friend was one of those over whom Rome—the City itself—exercises an unbounded fascination, to whom it is not one place out of many, but the true Rest and Home

OLD-WORLD ESSAYS

of the Spirit. What is the secret of this immense attraction felt by so many people? Not so much, one supposes, its antiquity, the mere duration of time, as the sense it gives of continuity, of succession in human things. The thought of human continuance through great stretches of time is overwhelming. It pierces one with an ever-fresh amazement that, say, in the eleventh century, in some town of Languedoc, a living, breathing crowd should have heard a real live *jongleur* declaim the Song of Roland, or that in the dim-lit streets of medieval Siena moving, speaking figures of flesh and blood should have looked up at the night sky and seen the familiar moon. Anything that binds the ceaselessly passing generations together, that brings these far-off people into touch with us, or with things and people of our own day, that gives us a thread to take hold of which they once held in their hands, is of the most absorbing interest.

This, of course, is pre-eminently what Rome does. The English College at Rome of which the story is told in great detail in Cardinal Gasquet's very interesting and valuable book,

CONTINUITY

may be taken as a symbol of the reciprocal action, the mutual commerce that there was between Rome and England from the earliest times. The 'Venerable College,' which was established by Pope Clement XIII at the end of the sixteenth century—1579 is the actual date of its foundation—was the successor of a Hostel for English pilgrims dating from the fourteenth century, and this had replaced a similar one erected six centuries before. The original foundation was the Schola Anglorum made by Ina, King of Wessex, in 725. Great numbers of the English before his time had made the 'Rome journey.' The first to have done so is said to have been St. Wilfrid in 654. (There is, by the way, a festival called 'Wilfrid Saturday' still observed every year at Ripon, at the beginning of August, when a representative of St. Wilfrid, in cope and mitre, parades the town on horseback, a peasant of the period holding his bridle.) Cædwalla had visited Rome before Ina, and Ethelwulf did so after him. The latter brought with him his son Alfred, who remained in the City a whole year. From these early days there

OLD-WORLD ESSAYS

was a permanent English colony in Rome.

One cannot attempt to follow the fortunes of this earlier establishment. We pass on to the circumstances which led to the foundation of the Hospice of the Most Holy Trinity and St. Thomas of Canterbury on the spot where the Venerable English College now stands. Its erection resulted from the Papal Jubilee of 1350. With the loss of the Holy Land, Rome had become more than ever the great pilgrimage place and centre of Catholic devotion. In 1350 the pilgrims from all nations are said to have numbered a million. A new street, still called the Via dei Pellegrini, was built for their accommodation. Many, by the way, seem to have made the whole journey by sea. Their sufferings were a favourite theme of medieval pleasantries. In one poem the Captain is made to say:—

‘ Hale the bowe lyne ! Now rere the shete,
Cooke, make redy anon our mete,
Our pylgrims have no lust to ete,
I pray God send them rest.’

Even when the goal of pilgrimage was reached the pilgrims seem to have found little rest, at any rate, in a bodily sense. ‘Many of

CONTINUITY

those,' we are told, 'that dwell in the neighbourhood of the basilica of St. Peter, force pilgrims and visitors to Rome to take lodgings in their houses. Moreover, what is worse, if pilgrims and visitors have taken up their abode elsewhere, these people drag them forth and compel them against their will to lodge in their houses.' One may question whether even this might not be preferable to the impossibility of getting 'taken in' at all, which one has sometimes known to result from the coincidence of immense crowds and insufficient accommodation on the more secular occasions of modern days. However, it was to remedy this state of affairs that the new English Hospice was founded in 1362.

Right up to the Reformation the tide of English pilgrims and travellers flowed to Rome. Again and again one comes across the venerated names of good old English worthies. John Colet, the famous Dean of St. Paul's, was enrolled as a child as a member of a Confraternity in connection with the Hospice. Dr. Thomas Linacre, the founder of the College of Physicians in England, was one of its officials in 1491. But the time

OLD-WORLD ESSAYS

of the great change was at hand. Cardinal Gasquet writes :—

‘ The defection of the King from the Church naturally changed the status of the English Hospice in Rome. One large source of revenue—the contributions collected in England for its support—was immediately cut off, and the constant flow of pilgrims came to an end, at least for a time. From the date of the breach with the Holy See, the Hospice in Rome became for many years rather a refuge for the exiles for the Faith than a hospital for the poor, the sick, and travellers.’

Much more than the character of the English Hospice was changed in the sixteenth century. One cannot help thinking that Catholicism itself, no doubt necessarily, to a great extent lost its *humanitas*, its large contact with all human things, and became something technical, controversial. The European division was perhaps at its acutest point at the date of the foundation of the actual Venerable College. From within its walls came forth the ‘English Martyrs.’ Its prayer was ‘O bone Jesu, converte Angliam.’ St. Philip Neri—‘Pippo buono’ as the Roman populace called him—used to cry out as he met the students in the streets, ‘Salvete, flores martyrum.’ The goal set before these young

CONTINUITY

men was to die for the Faith in England. One may quote a page or two from the Martyrology of the College. The first student to lay down his life was Ralph Sherwin :—

‘ Having received sentence of death, in company with thirteen others, he was, on the first of December, placed on a sledge or hurdle with Briant (Father Campion being placed on another by himself) and dragged through the streets to Tyburn. . . . Campion having been executed, the hangman, as if to terrify him, seized upon him with his blood-stained hands, saying, “ Come, Sherwin, and take your reward.” Sherwin turned to him with a smiling countenance, embraced him, kissing his gory hands. The bystanders were so moved by this that they compelled the Sheriff to let him speak. He therefore took his stand on the ladder and made a most powerful address to the people, wherein he amazed all by the fervent expression of his interior joy. He blessed them, forgave every one, prayed for all. . . . Finally, his neck being in the noose, he continued till his last breath to exclaim in tones of unspeakable joy and with a cheerful countenance, “ Jesu, Jesu, Jesu, be to me Jesus.” ’

Of Sherwin the sixteenth-century writer says, ‘ Laden with irons he was cast into a darksome dungeon, yet his soul was free.’ This, by the way, is no doubt the origin of these lines of Faber’s :—

‘ Our fathers chained in dungeons dark
Were still in heart and conscience free.’

OLD-WORLD ESSAYS

Nothing is ever said in the world that does not come from something that has been said before. There are verses of Wordsworth and Keats and Tennyson that have sprung directly from some fountain of melody centuries old.

One other martyrological quotation. Cardinal Gasquet says :—

‘ Joseph Lampton suffered a savage and most horrible butchery at Newcastle-on-Tyne, July 27, 1592, being cut down while still alive, and a felon from the prison, as a ransom for his own life, was appointed to carry out the barbarous task of disembowelling and quartering the martyr. In the midst of his barbarous task he was filled with horror at what he was doing, and refused at all costs to continue. The sheriff was obliged to seek for another whilst the sufferer still living continued to endure with courage and patience a torment which shocked all present. At length a butcher from a neighbouring village was brought who completed the ripping-up and disembowelling.’

As we contemplate the deeds wrought by the constituted authorities, the guardians of law and order, and exponents of loyalty, patriotism, and religion—deeds much the same in every age, with a variety only of circumstance and plausible justification—we may well feel thankful for the natural goodness of the unsophisticated common people,

CONTINUITY

and for the human heart so often, as here, found beating in the breast of a 'felon.' One understands too (if one may say so without irreverence) how it was that the Founder of the Faith found Himself so much more at home with the disreputable classes than with the patriots and religionists of His day.

I know that it is possible to exhibit these meek sufferers in a very different light ('I like Catholics as a persecuted minority,' I remember once hearing it said), but I confess that for my own part I cannot read their story without feeling my whole mind flooded with an irresponsible sympathy. It is hard, too, not to sympathize with those Englishmen who, when for the great mass of their countrymen the old attraction was changed into (or perhaps only disguised as) repulsion, carried on the old tradition of intercourse and familiarity with Rome. They, the derided and persecuted members of an 'un-English' sect, must have felt themselves more English than ever, the true Englishmen, the heirs of Wilfrid and Alfred, of Colet and Linacre. Be all this as it may, one is glad

OLD-WORLD ESSAYS

to find that life in the English College was not without its amenities. In 1595 the College was heavily in debt. The following is quoted from the report of the investigating Cardinal :—

‘ One source of heavy yearly expense to the College is that on days of recreation at the Vigna (once a week in spring and twice in summer) dinners are given of many courses and to many guests, for the fathers and the students often invite externs. The two annual festivals of the College are the Most Holy Trinity and St. Thomas of Canterbury, on which days musicians are hired at a cost of over 100 scudi ; grand dinners are provided for them and for more than two hundred other guests ; so that on these days the College spends more than 300 scudi.’

There were at this time in the College forty-seven students, eight fathers, and nineteen servants. All through the seventeenth century the College kept up its tradition of hospitality. Milton, Evelyn, Harvey (the discoverer of the circulation of the blood) were all entertained there.

When the French took possession of Rome in 1798 the College ceased to exist. It was reopened in 1818 under the presidency of Bishop Gradwell. The face of this ecclesiastic as shown in his portrait, all piety and benevo-

CONTINUITY

lence, a good deal of shrewdness mixed with its holy simplicity, reminds one of the pictures of Mr. Wesley's preachers in old Methodist magazines. The Holy Father showed extreme benevolence to the newly-constituted College. Dr. Gradwell writes in a letter to England :—

‘ On Holy Saturday four porters and some of his servants carrying on their shoulders something covered with a white sheet strewn with artificial flowers came out of the Pope's palace, walked solemnly across the Square of St. Peter, past the Castle and Bridge of St. Angelo, till they stopped at the door of the English College where they sent for me, and said they had brought this burden as a present from the Pope. Hundreds of people were following to see what this novel spectacle could mean. And what do you think it was? A fine, fat, live calf, with a halter of red silk and gold on its head, its feet tied with red silk cords to the litter, and its head and neck adorned with beautiful garlands of artificial flowers. It was a beautiful animal.’

One of the first students in the reconstituted College was Nicholas Wiseman. Another was Daniel Rock, the author of *The Church of Our Fathers*. With Dr. Wiseman, who was afterwards the Head of the College, and of whom a most attractive portrait is given, we are in our own time. One cannot help having a very warm place in one's heart for Nicholas Cardinal Wiseman. He must have very

OLD-WORLD ESSAYS

much enjoyed being a Cardinal. In one of his books he tells us that in 1839 he witnessed in Rome the canonization of St. Alfonso Liguori. Now Liguori was born in 1696. In 1839 the pennant of his banner in the procession was upborne by a venerable man who was his nephew, and who had been confirmed by him. The sense of continuity is strongly impressed on the mind by such a detail as this.

A TRACT AND A WINDOW

The Naked Truth. By Herbert Croft, Lord Bishop of Hereford in 1675. With an Introduction by Herbert Hensley Henson, Lord Bishop of Hereford in 1919. (Chatto & Windus. 6s.)

THE same post which brought this book for review brought me also from a friend an engraving of the 'Creation Window' in the Church of St. Neot in Cornwall. I am setting out to write about the book, but I cannot help looking at and thinking about the window. Its date is 1400. One sees in its five great lights, Our Lord saying 'Fiat Lux,' dividing the land from the sea, creating beasts and birds, forming Adam from the clay, taking Eve from his side. Here is all the story of the Garden, Adam and Eve at the apples, the cherubim and the flaming sword, Adam with his spade and Eve at her distaff, the fire from Heaven consuming Abel's acceptable sacrifice, Abel the meek martyr with outstretched hands bowing his head

OLD-WORLD ESSAYS

beneath the axe which Cain raises to decapitate him, the Almighty (curiously enough in that single instance, God the Father) setting the curse on Cain, Lamech with an immense bow and arrow shooting him, Adam on his death-bed with Seth placing the three seeds beneath his tongue. In this last picture there is a curious little bit of medieval realism in the night-commode standing by the bed. It is all very large, free and vital. It also somehow seems strangely new. It strikes one as the work of an artist who lived in sight of the Atlantic. You hear the great breakers rolling in as the sun shines through this window. The painter must have seen the beach strewn with oranges and casks of Spanish wine, the cargoes of wrecked ships, and mermaids and sea-monsters cast ashore, or sometimes a turtle borne into Cornish waters from the yet unknown West Indies. (On that evening the children would have turtle soup for supper in the big red-floored kitchen.) You find such things in church windows dating from the fourteenth to the sixteenth century. The most glorious ship known to me is one in which St. Paul is going to embark, on a win-

A TRACT AND A WINDOW

dow in King's College, Cambridge. Neither can there be anywhere else such marble houses as those upon the quay on which he bids farewell to those who will see his face no more. In this old world the harper David was the king of Cornish minstrels. From it came the ballad 'To-morrow shall be my Dancing Day.' It was a gorgeous world the old window-makers lived in, and it had a living heart—*Cor Mundi*.

When one reluctantly leaves wool-gathering (the best of wool-gathering is that you sometimes bring home the Golden Fleece) and turns from the window to the book one finds oneself in a very different kind of sphere. The age of windows has been succeeded by the age of tracts. After the sixteenth century Christianity seems to have ceased to have had any large contact with Nature or human life, and to have shrunk and dwindled to something merely technical. It withdrew to a narrow field of arid disputation, sometimes, so at least it seems to us, about incredibly trivial things, as about ceremonies, which to their upholders were mere ceremonies, and which their opponents only suspected of

OLD-WORLD ESSAYS

meaning something. The large affairs, the real interests of men, were secularized.

But let us come to the good Bishop. There are at least two things which one likes about him. The first is his face. It is the typical face of a benign and courtly seventeenth-century ecclesiastic, a very human face withal. One sometimes wonders, by the way, if there has been a change in the human countenance during the last two centuries. The main difference is in the length of the nose. If the portraits of sixteenth and seventeenth-century statesmen and ecclesiastics are to be trusted, their noses were in general immensely long, and Bishop Croft in the picture given here is no exception. Be that as it may, he has a most venerable aspect. It is the face of a man of God, of one who was, we are sure, a true father in God. We are not surprised to read what Wood says of him, that—

‘he was much venerated by the Gentry and Commonalty of that diocese for his learning, doctrine, conversation, and good hospitality.’

and that—

‘he made little show of his charity . . . but they that were privy to his concerns knew it was very ample, in

A TRACT AND A WINDOW

augmenting small livings and relieving many in distress, besides a weekly dole to 60 poor people at his palace gate in Hereford, whether resident there or not, for his country house being situated in the centre of his diocese, he spent much time there, where he was no less charitable in relieving the poor and visiting the sick in the neighbouring parishes, as is very well known.'

All of which is very clearly to be seen in his face.

The second thing one likes about him is his style. He writes excellently, in a good plain, colloquial English. 'Now I will tell you a story that comes into my head,' he says. Indeed, he greatly dislikes academic discourses and the subtleties of the schools. In his love for simplicity and naturalness in preaching, and his distaste for the pomposity and artificiality of a conventional religion, he reminds one of Dr. Neale. But his main contentions are by no means those of Dr. Neale. His aim is the construction of an 'Ideal Church,' in which all English-speaking Protestants are to be included. The object of his treatise is to advocate such a comprehension of the Nonconformists 'as would make the Church of England truly national.' So his successor in the see of Hereford, Dr.

OLD-WORLD ESSAYS

Hensley Henson, writes in his 'Introduction.' This genuinely national Church of England is to be a great bulwark against Popery. The Bishop's scorn of 'those simple sectaries and meer Phanaticks,' the Papists, is unbounded. To include the Nonconformists in a combination against them he is willing to make great concessions.

'The Fathers of our Church (as I said before) when they reformed this nation from Popery were desirous to fetch off as many as they could, retaining for this cause all the ceremonies and forms of prayer they could with a good rectified conscience, and therefore they prescribed that form of second service to be said at the Altar, as carrying some resemblance to the Mass, then the people's delight, which now being become the people's hate, should for the same resemblance, according to the same rule of reason now be taken away. . . . Our forefathers endeavoured to please and gain the people, we will needs displease and lose them. Certainly we cannot do our forefathers a greater honour than to observe their rule of reason, to conform to the times.'

He is ready to give up all ceremonies ; certainly, as he takes pains to make clear, they mean nothing to him.

'I affirm 'tis a very fitting thing to show reverence to the house of God, and to show it by bowing as by any other means, and to bow that way as well as any other way, and in bowing, if the congregation did it to the

A TRACT AND A WINDOW

West or to the South, I should as readily conform to that. But you will say, the Primitive Christians, as we read, did generally bow to the East . . . what then, is this any obligation on us now ? The Primitive did also use Chrysme or consecrated Oyl ; yet we retain it not ; it grew into an abuse, therefore left off ; so hath this bowing to the Altar by the Papists, supposing Christ corporally present there ; and truly some of our Churchmen give great suspicion to the people that they also believe some such thing.'

He defends them from the charge with great earnestness, but, after all, I cannot help thinking it probable that some of them did believe something of the kind.

Concerning this whole question of ceremonies I am tempted to leave the good Bishop and make a digression. As they passed from the age of windows to the age of tracts, people still wanted an external representation of their religion. They wanted something, but they did not know what it was they wanted. In all matters connected with the memorials of the dead, for instance, there was a reaction to the forms of Paganism. But this never really satisfied people. In the old days, say, at Plougastel in Brittany, if they wanted a memorial they made a Calvary. Nothing else occurred to their minds ; nobody made

any alternative suggestion. Local stone-masons carved it; the whole population helped in whatever way they could; people still come from the ends of the earth to see it. In our day the feeling wavers between the Pagan and the utilitarian. But what will be the future fate of the pillars and pumps set up as memorials of the Dead in the Great War? The Cenotaph lately erected in London was described by a writer in these columns as 'hard and pagan.' No one indeed could call it anything else. But the point even of the Paganism of the original design had been suppressed by the authorities. It had been intended to uphold a brazier in which was to burn a perpetual fire. This indeed would have brought a breath of the Spirit into London. It is indeed a universal religious symbol, Christian as well as Pagan. The church or temple of any religion worth the name, one feels, would have in it perpetually both fire and water. Such ideas belong to the 'comprehension' of the medieval window-makers, a reconciliation of Christian and Pagan, a religious representation of the whole life of man.

A TRACT AND A WINDOW

The present time probably appears to Dr. Henson a very opportune moment for the re-publication of his predecessor's pamphlet. There seems in many quarters a desire to salve the whole Anglican system (not only the ecclesiastical side of it) by forming a compact, solid body as a bulwark against what is called Bolshevism and in defence of the existing order of things. Such unimportant matters as religious differences must not be allowed to divide and weaken this conservative force. A lady writes a fervent poem in praise of an 'All-British Church.' No less a person than Sir Douglas Haig desiderates 'a truly national—I may even say Imperial Church.' The Bishop of London states publicly that 'there is no difference in doctrine between the Wesleyan Methodist body and the Church of England.' But is this really so? Does the Bishop know, for instance, five Wesleyans who accept the Catechism statement about baptism? The writer of the tract I have been considering, for all his utilitarian Protestantism, appears to hold a sacramental doctrine to which no Nonconformist I ever met with would sub-

OLD-WORLD ESSAYS

scribe. A 'union' between people who believe the 'Catholic' doctrine of sacraments and those who believe nothing of the kind would be as unreal as a 'Coalition' between Free Traders and Protectionists. One party or the other would have to give way, to be swallowed up.

For my own part I cannot but think that in religious matters as in everything else the word of the future is 'international.' A 're-union' of Churches which should take no account of Rome and the East would but postpone the difficulty. It would be like a League of Nations with Russia and Germany left out. Therefore one cannot feel that the Bishop's tract contains anything of real value for the present day. But in leaving the kindly, garrulous, opinionated old man one has the sensation of saying 'good-bye' to a very attractive figure.

So having done with the tract, I turn again to the contemplation of the window.

THE WAY OF MARY

‘THE music you hear in Russian churches robs you of the sense of time.’ In these words Mr. Stephen Graham, in his new book, *The Way of Martha and the Way of Mary* (Macmillan), has probably put his finger on the secret of the religion of Russia. The Eastern Church, it is well known, refuses the distinction of past, present, and future in dealing with divine things. Let us quote some words of St. Augustine to express this. He says : ‘And since Thy years fail not, Thy years are one To-day. How many of ours and our fathers’ years have flowed away through Thy To-day, and from it received the measure and the mould of such being as they had, and still others shall flow away, and so receive the mould of their degree of being. But Thou art still the same, and all things of To-morrow and all beyond, and all things of Yesterday, and all behind, Thou hast done To-day.’

OLD-WORLD ESSAYS

Mr. Graham's sympathy with and understanding of the Russian mind and the Russian religion come, we imagine, from his sympathy with and understanding of this mystical point of view. He says :—

‘ We are provincial dwellers in Time ; we are few of us explorers ; and many who do explore Time explore it as moles do a field. We do not scan the vast stretch of Time from aloft ; we are patient plodders, crawling on hands and knees and poring over little plots of eternity. . . . But if we had the poet's eye and the poet's point of view, we could see the Time that was existent now, we could see it glowing and breathing and singing. We could see every event and circumstance in history—in living action, discharging itself, and yet not getting discharged, rampant.’

Again :—

‘ A joy of art and of the eyes is the passing of a moment thus, and the showing in a sculptured relief or in a picture or a poem all that was happening in the moment—the eternal life which the moment holds, the moment which we think passes, but which in truth never passes, but ever is. We move past the landscape of Time, and deceive ourselves that it is Time which passes us. It is we who pass through Time. The Time we have passed through remains.’

Mr. Graham shows us the Russian Church bearing witness to this Eternal Real World, with the throngs of transitory peasants in their evil-smelling sheep-skins, crowded together

THE WAY OF MARY

at her mysteries. To quote him once more :—

‘The vestments of the priests astonish one. They are gorgeous past belief. Whence comes that gold brocade? It was cut in another world. . . . And the voice of the clergy, that unearthly bass, that profound groaning and seeking of notes that man does not utter, that voice as of Jesus commanding the soul of the dead Lazarus to return to the dreadful and awful corpse? . . . All these things bear witness unto the truth. . . . It is possible to sing with angels and archangels. Failure in the work of Martha loses significance. Failure is even good, it is one more sign. . . .’

Here, we think, we have the heart, the essence, of that popular Russian religious philosophy which Mr. Graham so enthusiastically accepts. Evidently, there is no progress possible in that unchanging Eternal Present through which we pass. We confess, for our own part, to an immense sympathy with Mr. Graham and his Way of Mary; but, at any rate, we do not intend to oppose the idea of progress, to vote or speak against it. The Russian idea, the Eastern idea in general, is that of Destiny. The Destiny is there. In our appointed time we travel up to it. Hence come the large Russian tolerance in matters of morals, the indifference to moral standards, the absence of censorious-

OLD-WORLD ESSAYS

ness and condemnation, the sympathy with the wretched, the outcast, the criminal. Moreover, in Holy Russia, Destiny is the Will of God. It is embraced in union with One who was free, but who voluntarily entered the sphere of human fatality and bondage.

The sense of fatality is, we think, the mark of all really great literature. We feel it very strongly, for instance, in Mr. Hardy's magnificent poem 'The Dynasts.' But here the fatalism is pagan; into the darkness in which we are enclosed there comes no one long, piercing, and illuminating ray. The fatalism of the most typical Russian writers is fatalism with a difference—the difference being just Christianity.

'Russia is the fairest child of the early Church,' Mr. Graham says. The writer confesses that it is the sense of unbroken continuity with the original Christianity which has always rendered Russia so attractive to him. Ignatz—we have no dictionary by us—but we hope we have got the correct equivalent—the *istvotchik* who drives the traveller from the railway station to the inn—is directly the name-sake and god-child of St. Ignatius of Antioch. As the carriage

THE WAY OF MARY

starts, he makes the Sign of the Cross as St. Ignatius of Antioch made it. If in Protestant countries the continuity has been altogether broken, in Latin countries everything dates from the Counter-Reformation imposed on the people by force. 'Ignace' or 'Inigo' has no older patron or god-father than the Basque soldier, Ignatius of Loyola. 'Filippo' goes back only to Philip Neri, not to the Apostle St. Philip. But in Russia the sense of continuity is distilled like some healing, soothing balm in those great basilicas, beneath their coloured domes and gilded cupolas. It is an atmosphere like that in which some solemn Byzantine Mother of God might have stepped down from her glory of dim gold amid the dear mosaics of Ravenna, and talked in the dark Church with a tormented slave who had crept in to hide beneath her mantle, and charmed and soothed his pain until no scar nor bitterness remained of an anguish conjured and forgotten.

We think it is too hastily assumed, as far at least as England is concerned, that the way of Martha, the way of Social Reformers, of Charity Organizations, of philanthropic

OLD-WORLD ESSAYS

Boards and Societies, is the one way of the West. Mr. Graham says with great truth and discernment, 'Russia and England are akin, if it were only in the bond of Christianity. We have certain spiritual affinities.' The Russia of the 'Old Believers,' of the time of Peter the Great, swarming and fermenting with mystical sects, apocalyptic, visionary, strangely resembled the England of the seventeenth century. There has been nothing like it since the Reformation—at any rate, in Latin countries with their clear-cut worldly reasonableness, and indifferent shoulder-shrugging acquiescence in dogma. The present writer recently compared a French translation of Merejkowski's *Peter and Alexis* with the Russian original. The difference in tone and feeling, indeed in language, is most suggestive and striking. The mysticism of English little Bethels, the dreams as of Bunyan in his prison, the immense knowledge of Scripture, the copious use of Scriptural and liturgical language, with which the Russian book is impregnated, are altogether wanting in the French rendering. The ample and sonorous apocalyptic quotations, 'Be-

THE WAY OF MARY

hold He cometh with clouds and every eye shall see Him,' and the like, the very turn of the phrases exactly equivalent to the well-known English words, the ever-repeated cry, 'Even so come, Lord Jesus,' are sometimes altogether omitted, sometimes dryly abbreviated and rendered unrecognizable. The 'Second Coming' always appears merely as 'le Jugement dernier.' The exact dogmatic references to the Eucharist in the translation are quite lost. In particular, 'the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world' is an idea the translator is quite unable to grapple with. 'L'agneau sans tache' is as near as he can get to it. We should say that the translator had no acquaintance with the text of Scripture, and was quite insensible and colour-blind in matters of doctrine. It is like a man of the world who is not even a conventional church-goer, trying to express the thought of a devout and fervent evangelical. We imagine that this translator is a very typical specimen of the Latin layman. He is not mystical.

In England the mystical side of religion is repressed, the governing classes do not

OLD-WORLD ESSAYS

encourage it, though individuals among them feel it strongly ; its province, moreover, is continually encroached upon by philanthropic and utilitarian activities, the Way of Martha. But amid the humble Salvationists, for instance, it flourishes and blooms. The evangelical preachers, the sellers of gospels and givers of tracts, find ready sympathizers and willing hearers in Russia. In England religion is largely inarticulate, it cannot express itself. In Russia to pray is as natural as to eat and drink. People are not ashamed of it. We know in our own churches, the stiff bending down, the hiding of the face in its owner's hat. In Russian churches old peasant men and women wander from icon to icon talking aloud. Mr. Graham gives a very interesting account of some sort of gospel meeting he once attended. The service was to be concluded with prayer :—

‘ We all stood up to pray, and as we stood there began a murmuring and a mumbling and a calling, a general muttering and crying, a sonorous clamour, hands waving, faces thrown upwards towards heaven, faces drooping and sobbing, every one saying his own prayer, and every one saying different. It was a music, a symphony of pain and anguish from an orchestra of human hearts.’

THE WAY OF MARY

Well, all this is the Way of Mary. Is it all lost energy, all waste, like the ointment that might have been sold for three hundred pence and given to the poor? Is it a dream, useless and out of place in the seething, sinful cities of the real world, fit only for those fabulous towns of Russian legend, places of mirage and miracle, hidden in deep forests or rising out of the sea? Has the West anything to learn from her entranced and visionary sister? Mr. Graham says—the late St. George Mivart had said it before him—that Christianity is still a young religion. What will its future be in the long time to come? As far as Russia is concerned, there would seem to be one fitting home and shrine for all its dreams and hopes. The Church of St. Sophia was built of granite, marble, porphyry, malachite, alabaster, cedar, ivory, amber; the relic of a martyr was built between every tenth stone of its walls. Merejkowski says that it was erected to adorn the Kingdom of the Son; it has been withdrawn from it by its Moslem conquerors, though it is still within the Kingdom of the Father. Will it one day become, he asks, the Mother Church of the new Kingdom of the Holy Spirit?

HEATHEN FOLK-LORE

Folk-lore Round Horncastle. By the Rev. James Allpars Penny. (Horncastle. 1s. net.)

WE remember reading somewhere about a great sacred tree which used to stand outside the Temple of the Gods at Upsala, which, at the time of the forcible conversion of Scandinavia to Christianity was cut down, but which was long talked of and remembered by the people with an awe-struck veneration and regret. One spans the thousand years or so—we have the fear of the exact before our eyes, and name no dates—and sees it still flourishing and growing green. The tree might be cut down indeed by the men of the new faith, but its roots were never extirpated. The gloom and fierceness, the grimness of the Norse mythology, has lived on in men of northern race up to our own day. It is admirably reflected, its whole atmosphere is rendered, for instance, in *Wuthering Heights*.

HEATHEN FOLK-LORE

The tales told by the staunch old heathen people of remote parts of the North Riding of Yorkshire convey the same impression as that book.

A collection of Lincolnshire folk-lore stories has recently fallen into our hands, which has reminded us of chimney-corner chats of five-and-twenty years ago on snowy winter nights. This Horncastle folk-lore book is a fascinating little volume. Its style is curiously garrulous, and sometimes difficult to follow. It runs on like this, reminding one, save for the tragical nature of the matters with which it mostly deals, of *Mrs. Brown at the Seaside* :—

‘ Though years after the murder, and when people had almost forgotten about the poor fellow, who from the time he left Horncastle at four on the Sunday morning to go back to his master, Mr. Frank Warrender, who lived at Martin, three-quarters of a mile off, till his dead body was found at eight, could be discovered, until a father horrified his sons when he was dying by saying he had cut Stennet Jeffry’s throat and stolen his watch, which he gave them, but made them promise not to tell any one what he had confessed till he was safely buried.’

Many grim and dreadful stories are related in this rambling way. We imagine they were taken down as they were told by some loquacious and wandering narrator. The impres-

OLD-WORLD ESSAYS

sion they one and all give is the impression we have ourselves received from the narratives of the old heathen inhabitants of various parts of remote and rural England, who regarded Board-schools, policemen, temperance reform, and Methodist chapels with the same contempt with which the devotees of the grim divinities honoured beneath the shadow of the sacred tree of Upsala must have looked upon the unsubstantial and unbloody rites of the new white faith. Here is a typical example of one of these heathen folk-stories :—

‘ A man who was present with others when John Taylor was murdered in the Old Eler Tree, at Horsington, when he was twenty or twenty-one years old, nearly fifty years ago, told me that as they were all sitting drinking beer at the Feast of All Hallows, November 1, the light suddenly went out, and John Taylor suddenly cried out, “ Somebody has cut me, but it is nothing,” and when the light was re-lit, they saw his trousers, just above the knee, was cut, so they all went on drinking until the light again went out, and John Taylor again cried out, “ Yon little Devil has done for me,” and got up and went home where the Constable of Horsington was having supper with other friends, who went with his man to the Eler Tree and locked the door, where my informant and the rest still were. On the floor were the two knives the murderer had used, one to cut the leg and the other to rip up John Taylor, and as they both belonged to him,

HEATHEN FOLK-LORE

and a few days before he had a new blade put into one of them, he was arrested at once by the constable, who handcuffed him and took him to another public-house at the corner formed by the Horncastle road, etc., etc. Here the murderer threatened each of those present at the murder as they passed to do for them if they witnessed against him. He was tried, found guilty, and transported—not hung, as he ought to have been—for poor John only lingered in a dreadful state for a few days after being ripped up. All the provocation he had given was to say to his murderer, a week before, “Don’t have another turkey pie at the Feast.” ’

The murderer had, a short time before, stolen one of John Taylor’s turkeys, and his wife had put it into a pie. The woman who baked it had lifted the crust to see what was inside, and had told John Taylor what she found, warning him ‘not to have them up, or they will do for me for telling you.’ There are some very gruesome stories of heathen doings, as of the man and his wife who sharpened their servant girl on the grindstone, and an account of a steadfast old village pagan who, after committing in the course of his life several murders, died at the ripe age of ninety. Some of these folk-tales have a happier ending, as of the wife who attempted to poison her invalid husband by giving him toad-broth, but found it miraculously restored

OLD-WORLD ESSAYS

him. Sometimes a humorous touch comes in, but the humour is always grim, as in the story of the old man who asked the clergyman to allow him to be buried in the north-west corner of the churchyard, close to an old tree, and explained the reason for his request, which was that 'his spirit, from the top of the tree, might worret old Elsey whenever he passed near it to go to church.' There was also the notorious character who said: 'They may talk about makin' an honest livin'; but I'm one as can live dishonest.'

We ourselves believe that, in the old, remote, unrecorded England, wilful murder was a very common occurrence. The present writer lived for some years in an out-of-the-way Yorkshire hamlet, in a villainous, cut-throat looking old house, known as the 'Fairfax Arms.' It had once been a hall inhabited by country squires (of sorts), had fallen from that estate to the position of a village inn, and from that, again, to that of a quite deserted and unpatronized temperance hotel. The landlord, dispossessed of his once flourishing business, used to sit and grumble by the fire, and tell tales of the high and palmy days of

HEATHEN FOLK-LORE

the house. The servants of the old Squires of Fairfax Hall made a business of robbing the stage-coach which passed on the high road about a mile away, and murdering the passengers. 'Many's the day when the butler would cut a score o' throats, and then come home and lay the cloth for dinner.' We do not know how far back in the eighteenth century it was that these proceedings took place. There were frequent tales of isolated murders, of some farmer coming home from market with a well-filled money-bag, or of a traveller known to have valuables with him, putting up for the night in some sequestered village inn. These crimes were apparently never inquired into, or, at any rate, if their perpetrators were suspected, they were never brought home to them. 'They weren't so particular in them days,' you would be told. The methods of dealing with the sick and feeble-minded, again, were peculiar. The writer remembers hearing about some well-known character who went out of his mind. His friends sent for old Dr. Bowes, and old Dr. Bowes cut the patient's throat, apparently with the full consent and approbation of all concerned.

OLD-WORLD ESSAYS

The book is full of wizards, wise men, witches and their doings. In our own experience all heathen England believed in witchcraft. If these stories may be relied upon, some of the wise men round Horncastle rivalled in their curious skill the Indian jugglers, of whom travellers tell such marvellous tales. But there is never any trace of white magic. There is no softening gleam on all this folk-lore. The one supernatural being ever mentioned is the Devil. Around Horncastle he is spoken of as 'the Old Lad' or 'Samwell.' We have known him as 'the Old Lad' for five-and-twenty years, but 'Samwell' is new to us. Mr. Penny remarks : 'He is spoken of in a mixture of familiarity, affection, and awe which is very curious.' Dr. Neale's theory is well known. He writes :—

'Witchcraft occurs almost entirely in countries which are not Catholic. Scotland, Germany, and the Colonies in North America have furnished its most singular displays, and it chiefly prevailed in England during the Great Rebellion.'

Be that as it may, it is curious that all trace of Catholic mythology and devotion should so utterly have vanished from the popular mind. One wonders what pre-Reformation

HEATHEN FOLK-LORE

Lincolnshire was like. The collector of these stories was the Vicar of Stixwoud. We remember that some few years ago a banner of the Five Wounds, used on the Pilgrimage of Grace, was found in a Stixwoud farmhouse. What effect had the devotion to the Five Wounds on the people of Old England, and how came it so completely to disappear? There is a gigantic stone figure of St. Christopher with the Child, for instance, in the church at Terrington. Such figures occur here and there all over the country, but there is not the faintest popular recollection of the story. It is quite unknown to the people either of heathen or of Board-school England.

This book of folk-lore very clearly illustrates the importance of the Methodist Revival in leavening the heathen mass. In one or two examples we get something like Christian folk-lore in connection with it. For instance, there is a story of 'The Devil's Supper Party,' in which a Methodist preacher is awakened at twelve o'clock one Saturday night by a raging wind, and hears a terrible voice crying out, 'Come down to supper.' Trembling, he dresses and comes down.

OLD-WORLD ESSAYS

‘ When he got down he saw a very grand supper laid out on the table, with wine poured out in glasses, and twelve black devils sitting round the table, and a much bigger one at one end, with a chair left ready for him at the other, opposite him.’ Looking at him, the biggest Devil said : ‘ Ask a blessing.’ He was inspired to say :—

‘ Jesus, the Name high over all,
In hell or earth or sky ;
Angels and men before Him fall
And devils fear and fly.’

At the Name of Jesus, the devils all jumped up, and one by one disappeared, the thirteenth and biggest being the last to disappear at the word ‘ fly,’ and when he looked at the table there was nothing on it. This is a story that might have been taken from a sermon of a wandering thirteenth-century Franciscan friar. The hymns of John and Charles Wesley brought back to England something of the medieval devotion to ‘ the Name most dear to all faithful people, and terrible to evil spirits.’ Such outbursts of praise as—

‘ O, for a thousand tongues to sing
My great Redeemer’s praise ’

HEATHEN FOLK-LORE

are commonplaces of the French devotional books, with which the Wesleys were so familiar.

A piece of Methodist folk-lore we ourselves remember is the story of the young girl given to the vanity of painting and powdering her face, who, looking into her mirror, saw the face of Our Lord, streaming with tears and blood. The writer's grandmother used to tell a story of a local preacher who met a man and his wife who boasted that they never went either to church or chapel. 'If I give you half-a-crown apiece will you promise me that you never will go?' he replied. They accepted the offer with alacrity, but afterwards were smitten with fear that they had sold themselves to the devil. 'What a pity we didn't think to look at his feet,' said the man to his wife. They hastened to break the unholy compact, went to the Methodist chapel, and were soundly converted that very night.

There is much one might say about this extremely interesting little book. We are sorry to read on page 15 that 'the Feasts at Stixwould were put a stop to by the Squire, Mr. Christopher Turnor.' Why did Mr. Christopher Turnor do that?

ROUND ABOUT REIMS

THE thesis of a very striking paper read recently by Mr. W. E. Campbell, of Downside College, at a meeting in London, was that the journey of humanity on earth was not so much a progress as a procession. The Christian point of view could not be more clearly or concisely put. To see the point, however, one must understand that a procession is not merely to walk up or down an aisle. It is the making of a circuit. It returns to its starting point. The Italian equivalent of our 'Curses come home to roost' is 'Curses are like processions, they return to the spot from which they set out.' 'The spirit shall return to God who gave it.' Let us suppose a procession, say, on Ascension Day. It leaves the High Altar, goes all round the great church, or perhaps in some favoured place leaves the church and goes through the

ROUND ABOUT REIMS

streets of the town, re-enters the church and returns to the Altar again. 'I came forth from the Father, and am come unto the world; again I leave the world and go to the Father.' A true theologian preaching at such a beautiful function would say, one supposes, something like this: that our Lord came into the world and made the procession of human life, representing to man at every step of the way, and by every word and action, the justice, the understanding and the love of God, and that now returned there whence He came, He represents to God the goodness, the suffering and the sacrifice of man—the goodness at least possible to him, his suffering (as in the war), his sacrifice (as in the war), and the possibilities at least to which that sacrifice may lead; that He has taken with Him, too, all the treasure gathered in His earthly pilgrimage, the love of His Mother and all mothers, the artlessness and grace of little children, the simple affectionateness of Mary Magdalene, the large-hearted nobility of the thief. He would point out that human history is not stagnation, nor a mere endless progression to an

OLD-WORLD ESSAYS

indefinite goal, but motion, and motion homeward, the fulfilment of the perfect circle, and that we return to as

‘ We come
From God who is our home.’

The standing objection to Christianity—the force of which every one must have felt at times—is that it is something fixed, something by its very definition final, and therefore something which must inevitably be passed by and left behind by a world engaged in a never-ending progress. The idea of progress, moreover, to which we have become accustomed, is at any rate for the most part that of a material progress, a greater command of the forces of nature, a greater facility of attaining comfort and riches. It is concerned, at any rate for the great majority of its devotees, very little with spiritual things. When progress is so conceived, we need not wonder that it seems that the things that are outgrown, that have been left behind, may very well be destroyed. As we all know, this is what happened to the cathedral of Reims. One turns the pages of Mr. Ernest Williams’s translation of the Bishop of Dijon’s book, *The*

ROUND ABOUT REIMS

Cathedral of Reims (published by Kegan Paul), and says, as one looks at the scenes of ruin, 'This is what modern progressive civilization did with it, this is what it made of it.' But, one asks: If it had come unscathed through the war, what would have remained for it on the progressive theory but with the lapse of time to have been left ever more hopelessly behind, to have become more utterly meaningless and dead? Its actual martyrdom might almost seem a better fate than this. But if mankind is thought of as making a procession, the Cathedral of Reims, with its vast population of statues, may be regarded as the symbol, not of course the complete symbol, but a great living and sufficing symbol of the treasure gathered by mankind in the course of its pilgrimage (a treasure which is constantly being added to), which it jealously preserves and carries with it and presents at its journey's end.

Take the statues among which such havoc has been made. In the work of the old *imagiers* of Reims there is the representation of all man's life and effort on the earth. There is the beautiful figure of King David

OLD-WORLD ESSAYS

playing the harp ; that is Music. (This statue is unharmed.) The Queen of Saba, now mutilated and headless, is travel, exploration, the desire of knowledge, the quest of wisdom. The figure of the Law of Christ holding out to man the cup of joy and blessing has been entirely destroyed. The Angel who smiled at St. Nicaise the Martyr—the figure known as ‘The Smile of Reims’—may typify all influences that help man to endure, everything that holds before him in suffering the thought of an unearthly joy. The figure of Christ as a Pilgrim—that favourite theme of medieval art—with his broad-brimmed hat for shelter from sun and rain, going to Emmaus or perhaps to Compostella, his good bourdon and stout shoes, has also perished.

All this destruction was the work of people who conceived of human history as an endless progression to an indefinite goal. An immediate aim of material aggrandisement was what was really thought of, and whatever stood in its way was ruthlessly swept aside. How the thought of the building of Reims Cathedral, the carving and the setting up of all those statues, affects the

ROUND ABOUT REIMS

mind ! The thought of its destruction affects the mind, too, but in a different way. How different, for the matter of that, is the effect upon the mind of the setting up of something significant, from that produced by those insignificant and trivial installations of, say, gas, electric light, electric heating and the like, which go on endlessly in our own day. The insignificant is something which is merely material, which will and must inevitably be superseded by the very working of the forces which have produced it. One would give much to escape any contact with installations of this kind. One avoids the work and the workmen. But the writer found himself recently watching with breathless interest the setting up of the three figures, the Crucifix, St. Mary, and St. John, on the rood beam of an ancient and beautiful parish church. Here was something intensely significant, and, so it seemed, not to be superseded, at any rate without irreparable loss. Here was something coming directly from Calvary, an echo of Calvary, sounding clearly and distinctly after two thousand years in an English market town on market day. Here were

the workmen's tools—the ladder, the nails, the pincers—no longer common workaday things, but the very tools one sees in the pictures of the Passion. As they raised the Crucifix to its place the workmen chatted gaily, and one of them, a mere boy, whistled a bird-like fluting tune. This was the unconcern of the soldiers, but softened, harmonized, reconciled, a part of the Tragedy that has so long itself become a Reconciliation. One other spectator besides the writer, a boy from a watchmaker's shop, watched the scene with an alert, fascinated attention. On his face and the faces of the workmen was the look of eager curiosity and interest, the look that artists have, the look that comes from designing and making and ornamenting things. One imagines there was a very different look on the faces of the officers who ordered and the soldiers who executed the bombardment of Reims. A clock ticked in the church like a clock ticking in Eternity. As the work was completed and the figures stood up in their places the chimes in the tower broke out like a benediction.

During the war it was to many of us a

ROUND ABOUT REIMS

constant night-mare that the churches of Europe, the art of Europe, the old beautiful life of Europe, were being destroyed. It was grief unspeakable to see these things perishing before our eyes. The churches seemed to stand up like fragments of a vanished world amid a rising tide of squalid barbarism that threatened altogether to submerge them. Their bells rang out a pathetically unheeded message over the wastes of blood-stained mud. They had become antiquities, relics of a distant and ever-receding Past. The Present was filled with the most violent contradiction of that to which they witnessed. As to the old homely life of Christendom, one feared that it was swept away for ever. One may get a glimpse of that life in a corner of Europe, say, in the novels of Fernan Caballero. There was a rhyme about the different hours at which the followers of the various *métiers* got up in the morning. The pilgrim had an early start, and was on his way, if we remember, by five. One does not remember much about the plots of the stories, but the characters were delightful. There was the limping village schoolmaster with big

OLD-WORLD ESSAYS

ears, very erudite and with a heart of gold, who told his scholars that in true Castilian one must only use the adjective *santo* in connection with the pure things of God without earthly admixture, such, we suppose, as the Holy Office. One must not say, for instance, *santa libertad*. He also impressed upon them that according to all the Fathers it was not the greatness of the suffering but the goodness of the cause that made the martyr. The conversation of the generality was of a less elevated character. The inn-keeper told his wife with good reason that she had a wasp's nest in her mouth, and that every time she opened it a wasp flew out and stung some one. All these people filled the churches of Castile and Leon. They talked a very idiomatic vernacular. It would be said that some one had gone *sin decir ni chuz ni muz*. They believed with simplicity. The answer to the question as to who had been seen in the town would very likely be that 'His Divine Majesty was going to the Alcalde's.' It is a world one would have liked to have lived in.

Above all one felt a great pity for the

ROUND ABOUT REIMS

churches of Europe. One saw them ruined and mutilated in France and Belgium, despoiled in Germany, where bells and bronze statues (as at Innsbruck) were melted to be re-cast as cannon. It seemed that after the war they could only exist as forlorn ghosts in such a world as the war would have made it. One thought of all those visions of splendour one had had in France. Amiens, the first sight of Rouen, Chartres, that huge Druid cave filled with coloured light, that great jewel set in a radiance of incredible blue. What will be the future fate of the churches of Europe? They contain vast treasures of art. If the people turn away from them disillusioned by the powerlessness of Christianity to save them from the horror of the war, or identifying it with the system that is the cause of their misery, or still bent on pursuing the path of materialism, or for whatever cause, will they become merely museums? The Church of San Pietro in Perugia, disused and secularized (or almost entirely so—we believe Mass is still said at a single altar) is a perfect treasure house of marvellous things. But it is lifeless. The

OLD-WORLD ESSAYS

whole impression it gives is a sad one. Nothing on earth is sadder than a desecrated church.

Monseigneur Landrieux discusses the future of Reims. Whatever restoration is possible will no doubt be accomplished. It will be restored too as a church, not as a museum. There is a further hope which must fill the minds of all men of goodwill, and that is that the restored Cathedral will be not the shrine of a narrow and bitter nationalism nursing and keeping alive the fires of an undying hatred and revenge, but the temple of an international religion, the joy and pride of the whole brotherhood of peoples. It is sad to find Monseigneur Landrieux writing, 'It will be easy to re-make these figures without recourse to the replicas at Bamberg, even if it be admitted, as some contend without proof, that the Master of Bamberg is our Gaucher de Reims.' Many Frenchmen, Poles, and Spaniards manage to combine their Catholicism with a fanatical nationalism, which is, although they do not see it, its very antithesis. Surely the collaboration in the restoration of all the skill and knowledge available among

ROUND ABOUT REIMS

both victors and vanquished, injured and injurers, would be a thing of happy omen for the new Europe that we hope for, where the peoples are not merely madly racing one another for wealth, not merely 'forging ahead,' but joining together in a great and solemn procession, of which the opening words of the ritual are 'Let us go forth in Peace.' '*Procedamus in Pace.*' Then the great church, like the Crucifix itself, would be the symbol, not so much of a Tragedy, as of a Reconciliation.

CARDINAL BEMBO'S VILLA

IN the early Tuscan pictures the background is pure gold ; in them is no darkness at all. The life displayed upon this golden background is, however, the life of the real world. ' Early ' is, of course, a relative term—it is as well not to be too precise ; but there was a beautiful moment when the hieratic figures became humanized ; when the breath of life was breathed into the Byzantine icons. The cloistral vision entered the world of Nature and of men, as a Saint might leave her basilica, and flee away in the moonlight, the cold winds from the Adriatic fluttering her blue marble cloak. This is the effect given by Botticelli. As to most of the painters one thinks of, one should not speak of moonlight in connection with them ; their pictures are all sunshine. They are full of a virginal purity and dewy freshness as of April. It

CARDINAL BEMBO'S VILLA

would seem that a golden reasonableness should have been the flower of so divine a bud. But the bud was blighted in the storms of the sixteenth century, and never broke into its proper flower.

A certain sanity has always characterized the Italian mind, even in its most exalted states. St. Ambrose, if we mistake not, speaks in one of his hymns of a 'soberness of ecstasy.' When St. Catherine of Genoa, with her devout and rational helpers, set about her admirable foundations, schools, hospitals, and the like, she wrote to the Pope that she knew that at that time his Holiness was much occupied 'in the great work of the restoration of the arts.' She therefore did not expect from him any very active concurrence. It seemed to her quite fitting that the Vicar of Christ should be occupied in the restoration of the arts, or at any rate no touch of acidity, no breath of censoriousness, marred her saintly charity. The Italy of the Renaissance was full of saints, but to condemn others, to sit in judgment on their neighbours, above all, to speak evil of dignities, was no note of their sanctity. St. Antoninus of

Florence, St. Catherine of Genoa, Beato Angelico, were all, one feels sure, free from this blemish of a later piety.

These were the saints, of course ; ecclesiastical persons of a more ordinary type were often touchingly genial and human. Mrs. Cartwright's book, *Italian Gardens of the Renaissance* (Smith, Elder & Co.), has set us thinking of some of these great wide-minded humanists, and their beneficent activities, building churches, founding libraries, giving fountains, ordering pageants, planting trees, laying-out gardens.

There was, for instance, that lover of the country and the open air, the great Piccolomini Pius II. We open Creighton at random, and come upon this :—

‘ While awaiting the result of this negotiation, Pius II spent the autumn in making an excursion from Tivoli to Subiaco. . . . As usual, he enjoyed a leisurely journey by the side of the Anio, and was pleased with the simple homage of the rustics. He would dine by a spring of water with a crowd of peasants at a respectful distance. When he resumed his journey the peasants plunged into the water to fish, following the Pope in his course. When a fish was caught, a loud shout called the Pope's attention to the fact, and the trout was given as a friendly offering. . . . ’

CARDINAL BEMBO'S VILLA

A page or two further on we read :—

‘ Pius II had now established the custom of taking excursions from Rome for pleasure.’

One feels that the establishment of this innovation required a considerable amount of boldness and determination. Pius II had quite the modern feeling for Nature. The Renaissance ecclesiastics, by the way, had no love for stifling cells ; to get into the open air, and to spend as much time there as possible, seem to have been the very passion of their lives.

Mrs. Cartwright does not deal with this admirable and many-sided man, but the most charming sketch in her book is devoted to another great humanist ecclesiastic. It is entitled ‘ Cardinal Bembo and his Villa.’ She tells of his ‘ passionate delight in country sights and sounds, in the song of the first nightingale, and the coming of the swallow, in the daily miracle of sunrise and sunset, and the wonder of the spring.’ He used to write about all these things to his friend and patroness, Lucrezia Borgia, the Duchess of Ferrara. ‘ I write to your Highness,’ he says, ‘ sitting at an open window, looking on

OLD-WORLD ESSAYS

the sweet and fresh landscape, and commend myself to you as many times as there are leaves in the garden.' We see him first as Secretary to the great Renaissance Pontiff, Leo X. This was half-a-century after the death of Pius II. An ugly storm was brewing in the North, and black clouds were already covering the clear humanist sky. He left Rome in 1521, and thus describes his departure :—

' God knows that I left Rome and Pope Leo on pretence of taking a short holiday for the good of my health, but with the firm resolution never to return, and to spend the rest of my life for my own enjoyment, not for that of others.'

We imagine that this frame of mind is not unknown to modern statesmen. Has not Lord Rosebery confessed that when detained in London he feels ' enclosed in the net of the retiarius ' ?

Bembo's next ten years were spent in a delightful Villa near Padua, in the companionship of the beautiful girl Morosina, the mother of his three lovely children. It must be remembered that he was not a priest ; he was but in minor orders, an exorcist, or something of

CARDINAL BEMBO'S VILLA

the kind. The presence of Morosina did not deter even such saintly ecclesiastics as Sadolet, the Bishop of Carpentras, the great theologian, Contarini, and Reginald Pole, the Cardinal of England, from being his frequent and delighted guests. His goodness to the peasants on his estate, the simple contadini whom he protected and defended in all ways, seems to have been boundless. His account of his life at the Villa is most charming :—

‘ I need not think of lawsuits, or wait on procurators, or visit auditors of the Rota. I hear nothing but the voices of nightingales. I read, I write, when I choose I ride or walk, I spend much of my time in a grove at the end of a fruitful and pleasant garden, where I gather vegetables for our evening meal, and sometimes pick a basket of strawberries which perfume our whole breakfast table with their fragrance.’

We know those strawberries ; they grow, flower, and fruit together, in the Tuscan pictures.

He studied Provençal poetry, and, to please the Duchess Lucrezia, wrote Spanish verses. He and the distinguished guests examined Greek codices, and discussed Petrarch's sonnets, and read one another their own poems and romances. Presents arrived daily at the

Villa—a retriever, a superb basket of strawberries, a brace of quails, a big bundle of asparagus. Bembo always accompanied his own gifts of strawberries or flowers with a canzone of his own making. The house was full of roses. The three children—Pietro, Torquato, and Elena—were merry as crickets. It is strange to think of these careless people, all talking Venetian in the clear Paduan air four hundred years ago. This would be the speech of the Villa : they would shout out to one another in Venetian when they found the first cyclamen or saw the first swallow. Cardinal Pole—‘ Monsignore d’Inghilterra ’—would speak Venetian through all his long years of exile. One sees them all ; the illustrious guests, the beautiful Morosina, the merry children. One sees the salone ; the red silk curtains bellying out like sails at a sudden gust from the Lake of Garda. (It is true, the Villa was not on the lake ; shall we say a sudden breeze from the sea-coast of Bohemia ?)

The Villa was not without alarms of war. In the spring of 1528 Bembo was dreading the passage of the Germans. But the cloud of

CARDINAL BEMBO'S VILLA

war was soon dissipated in those days. 'I hear,' he writes, 'that these cursed Germans are marching on Peschiera, and we shall be rid of them to-morrow. Tell my aunt, Madama Cecilia,' he characteristically adds, 'that a most delicious nightingale has been singing in the garden for the last four days.' One cannot help thinking that some memory or tradition of villas such as Bembo's was in the mind of the English Jesuit poet who, in the sterner days of Good Queen Bess, sang of that 'sweet home' where 'they live in such delight, such pleasure, and such play.' At the death of Morosina, Bembo was made a Cardinal, and at the age of seventy was ordained priest. Shortly afterwards we hear of him 'in his new diocese of Gubbio.'

The stupendous upheaval of the sixteenth century turned the humanist ecclesiastics of the fifteenth into persecutors and martyrs. They fled from the temporale which burst upon them into a gloomy dungeon-like fortress as their shelter and defence. Sir Thomas More was both a Catholic persecutor and martyr, but he had first written the 'Utopia.' How great is the distance traversed between

the humanist Pius II and the Inquisitor, Pius V ! Two fanaticisms in the North and South of Europe faced one another. The voices of men like Pole and Contarini in all their gentle reasonableness, pleading for moderation, comprehension, toleration, were uplifted in vain. Nietzsche, by the way, we remember, has a praising word for the mild dignity and benignity of Contarini. The present writer confesses that both Contarini and Pole are among his saints and heroes. The life-history of Pole is a very pathetic one. After his long exile, when he returned to his native land as the Papal Legate on the accession of Mary Tudor, he must have rejoiced to see England with all her churches once more in the unity of the Faith. But the work of burning heretics which he was expected to take up was a very uncongenial task. Here, too, he pleaded for moderation and tolerance, but again in vain. It is said that in his diocese of Canterbury no heretics were burned. But he still went on planting fig-trees. In the rain-sodden, fever-smitten, ague-plagued England of those dreadful days, reeking with the smell of burning human flesh, how he

CARDINAL BEMBO'S VILLA

must have sighed for the Villa ! But the age of Christian humanism was over. In the North, sacred pictures of every kind were destroyed, and in the South, Benozzo Gozzoli's angels gave place to dreadful Spanish flagellations and tortures, and Pius II's sunny pageants to demonstrations of a terrifying fanaticism. There was a prophetic and typical significance in the sack of Rome by the combined forces of the Spaniards and the Lutherans in 1539.

A DEBATE OF THE OLD WORLD

ONE can begin the consideration of the Old World nowhere better than at Abbeville. The place has been sketched for us by a master hand. Who does not remember *Præterita*?

‘But for pure unalloyed pleasure, the getting in sight of Abbeville on a fine summer afternoon, jumping out in the courtyard of the Hôtel de l’Europe, and rushing down the street to see St. Wulfran before the sun was off the towers, are things to cherish the past for—to the end.’ Here, indeed, as the young Ruskin saw it, is the perfect image of the Old World.

‘At Abbeville I saw that art—of its local kind—religion, and present human life were yet in perfect harmony. There were no dead six days or dismal seventh in those sculptured churches; there was no beadle to lock me out of them or pew-opener to shut me in. I might haunt them, fancying myself a ghost;

A DEBATE OF THE OLD WORLD

peep round their pillars like Rob Roy ; kneel in them and scandalize nobody ; draw in them and disturb none. Outside the faithful old town gathered itself and nestled under their buttresses like a brood beneath the mother's wings ; the quiet uninjurious aristocracy of the newer town opened into silent streets beneath self-possessed and hidden dignities of dwelling, each with its courtyard and richly trellised garden. . . . Above the prosperous, serenely busy and beneficent shop, the old dwelling-house of its ancestral masters ; pleasantly carved, proudly roofed, keeping its place and order and recognized function, unfailing, unenlarging, for centuries.'

It was at Abbeville, we think, that Mr. Ruskin saw the figure of the dyer, all black—or was it bronze ?—set against a huge blossoming tree. Here is the content, the pleasantness, the quaintness, of the old Gothic world.

Well, suppose one had been at Abbeville, say, on the morning of the 1st of July in the year 1766. It is less than a hundred and fifty years ago. One would have seen set up in the Square a great spiked wheel, over which the swallows flickered in their beautiful

ecstasy. In the radiant summer morning one might have noticed an urbane and courteous priest coming from his Mass in the glorious Church of St. Wulfran into the homely and delightful market place, and caught his answer to an inquiring stranger : ‘ Le supplice aura lieu à dix heures, monsieur.’ The question was of the execution of the sentence upon the Chevalier de la Barre, a young man of nineteen years, who had been recently condemned to have his tongue torn out with red-hot pincers, his right hand cut off, and to be broken upon the wheel, for having refused to kneel during the passage of a religious procession. The sentence was to be carried out that day. The reader will remember that the incident is referred to by Dickens in the opening chapter of the *Tale of Two Cities*. He says that the punishment was inflicted ‘ for refusing to kneel to a procession of dirty monks.’ This is a somewhat inadequate statement of the offence ; but we will not dwell on that point. We will rather try to see how it struck the contemporaries. Here is, say, the courtyard garden of one of those quiet uninjurious houses—the home of genera-

A DEBATE OF THE OLD WORLD

tions of Picard notaries, or perhaps the house of one of the members of the local *Parlement*, which had given the sentence, so soon to be carried out. The place is gay with old-fashioned flowers, stocks, mignonette, a big bunch of campanulas, in every bell a bee. On a rush-bottomed chair under a lime tree sits an old *bonne*, shelling peas for *déjeuner*. She has a strong sensible face under her spotless *coiffe* and crown of white hair, shrewd, kindly, a good face, with a certain severity in its goodness. You know her for a pillar of faithfulness and probity, zealous for the interest and honour of the house, a mother to three generations of children. She shells her peas, untroubled by the dreadful preparations in the Square. When some one mentions them, she replies, 'Ce sera une punition exemplaire.' That summer evening no doubt saw the peaceful anglers bending above the green-chalk water of the Somme.

Good people, one thinks, turned away their eyes from scenes of torture, but when they were forced upon them they would express the traditional approbation. The individual was after all no Atlas, with the weight of the

world on his shoulders. These things were the affair of the Social Order into which he had been born, and in which he subsisted. His business was with his own individual life. In the framework provided for him at a cost he did not too closely inquire into, he could live contentedly and happy, he could fulfil the duties of his state, he could drink white wine and play bowls, he could sing, and sometimes even make, such songs as 'Si le Roy n'avoit donné.' He could, moreover, endeavour after the Christian goodness. In England at the very time of this boy's execution, the excellent Bishop Challoner was writing his admirable *Meditations*, in which the individual Christian is exhorted to meekness, humility, charity, the forgiveness of injuries, the avoidance of slander, the following of peace. Some quarter of a century afterwards the representatives of that old order, which had tortured Jean Calas and the Chevalier de la Barre, who had probably themselves applauded the torture, the exiled nobles with their gaiety and charm, the mild and charitable priests, touched and edified all England by the dignity of their demeanour in misfortune. Charm,

A DEBATE OF THE OLD WORLD

indeed, gaiety, courtesy, grace, leisure, devotion, found a home inside the dreadfully protected frame of the Old World. There was an Infanta of Spain, who at the zenith of the activity of the Holy Office, when the Inquisitors were busy roasting the soles of the feet of the witnesses before their Tribunal, made an unalterable resolution never to speak ill or listen to ill of any human creature, and who made daily with her own hands dainties to carry to the sick poor in the Hospitals of Madrid.

In the year 1907, a monument, hideous no doubt to the æsthetic sense, was erected in Abbeville, bearing the inscription : ' En commémoration de la martyre du Chevalier de la Barre, supplicié en Abbeville, le 1 Juillet, 1766, à l'âge de 19 ans, pour avoir omis de saluer une procession.' There are those who deplore the erection of such monuments in the peaceful old-world places. A recent writer suggests that this particular statue ' might with advantage be toppled over into the Somme.' In France some youthful politicians of the extreme Right carry on a propaganda *de fait*, having for its object ' the

prevention of the erection of atheist monuments.' But as in her glorious fanes the Church commemorates her Saints and Martyrs, it seems meet and right that in the market-squares and on the bridges of Europe there should be set the memorials of her victims—the statues of Giordano Bruno, of Jean Calas, of the Chevalier de la Barre. It is hard to take sides ; after all, as Mr. Belloc reminds us, do not the atheists of Périgueux wish to be buried in the Cathedral of St. Front, and lie in state amid the big candles ? Nothing belonging to the history of Europe can be forgotten or blotted out. Europe would not be Europe without the two great forces of order and revolt represented by the Church of St. Wulfran and the statue of de la Barre. One hopes for something that will comprehend, will include and unite Europe. The day may perhaps come when the Church will appear as the great Penitent.

Mr. W. D. Howells says, if we remember, that 'in old-world lands one learns to hate and detest the Past.' Here we think it necessary to distinguish. Certainly, we understand what he means well enough. We

A DEBATE OF THE OLD WORLD

ourselves were shown some little time ago a well in the prison of the Castle at Ghent. 'Up to the time of the Revolution,' the guide suavely informed us, 'it was used to provide water for the torture.' This went on for some five centuries. This is a thought one does not choose to dwell on. Yet does one, as Mr. Howells says, 'hate and detest the Past'? One detests the horrible accidents, no doubt, the hideous means by which the framework of the old order of things was protected, the bloody rags of the tortures of five hundred years. But one loves the old life of Europe which went on, largely, one thinks, unaffected by such things. By a curious paradox, the great prophets of the Revolution have all been romanticists. Who ever felt the charm and fascination of the Old World like Michelet, or made his readers feel it as he does? Think, for example, of Victor Hugo's description of the bells of Paris, which, by the way, appears to have suggested Faber's magnificent passage on the bells of the Old English Lady Day! What a lover of the Middle Ages, again, was William Morris! The Romantic Movement was the

child of the Revolution. In England, Tractarianism was the Romantic Movement on its religious side. It may after all be that the Church and the Revolution are two sides of one same thing—that is, Christianity.

It is a profound remark of Quinet's: 'In destroying Christianity the Revolution fulfilled it.' This is no doubt an idealized statement; what has been the actual course of Europe since 1789? Napoleon, Bismarck, the Empire-Builders at their dreadful trade, the ghastly Moloch of the German Army, with its toll of two hundred suicides a year, its wretched conscripts with their feet like raw beef after one of the Kaiser's stupid parades. The bareness of this conception of the State, as Lord Morley says, is hidden by no mystic doctrine. A revolution which would overthrow European militarism would indeed be the fulfilling of Christianity. On it might follow the rise of a New World, with all the grace and charm and beauty of the Old, a large and noble order into which would be incorporated the humanity, the spirit of indignation and of pity, the Christianity fulfilled of those who destroyed the torture chambers, and threw down the Bastilles in 1789.

THE ASPECTS OF THINGS

IN the opening essay of his new volume, *Vanishing Roads* (G. P. Putman & Sons), Mr. Richard Le Gallienne writes sensitively and well of the varying aspects of Nature and the changes of the year. We remember asking a genial Anglo-American novelist which was his favourite month or season, and receiving the winningly urbane answer, 'I support them all with equanimity.' His surroundings were indeed ample, and such as were conducive to the savouring of the charm, not only of spring flowers and sunshine, but also of November frosts and fogs. But there are mortals, many of them less fortunately placed, who find all kinds of weather good and all times of the year delightful. There floats into one's mind a confused remembrance of a poem in which a young Italian enthusiast of the Risorgimento hesitates in his plotting of the murder of some Austrian general or

archduke as he thinks of the skies of the coming year that he will miss, the April rainbows, the flaming autumn sunsets. We apologize to the reader for our imperfect recollection ; we believe it is Browning.

The writer confesses that he is unable to answer his own query as to the months of the year. There is the time of the first flush of pink almond blossom, the time of a new stir and excitement when whispers of a happy, unsuspected secret are going all abroad, and little by little, here and there, a world that has only known winter, a world of rock and ice, breaks into flower. There are those skies of mid-April when the swallows come back to Europe, that smile of the earth as of a child's face with all trouble washed away. There are the fairy cowslip meadows of the first week in May, the time of tulips. But better still is the time of sweet peas, the early days of July, when the soft, warm, delicate blue of the sky is flecked and veined with streaks of lucid, pearly cloud. But best of all is harvest weather, the week when August melts into September, the most magical week of the year, with its mystery and repose, its

THE ASPECTS OF THINGS

hush, its ripeness, its mellowness. To come in late August sunshine upon the angle of an English country cottage, with the hollyhocks, white and dark red and yellow, standing high against the walls, gives a very homelike feeling. Such pictures, like visions of unattainable waters to the thirsty, must often have risen before the mind's eye of exiled and travelling men. What an intensity of homesickness, for instance, may have fallen with the sense and memory of a Norfolk village upon some bedizened and beturbaned English wanderer some afternoon of a year of the late eighteenth century in the autumn streets of Fez !

September is the year's time of unanxious tranquillity and leisure. Its blue, at any rate, in happy southern-sloping places, is unflecked and stainless, infinitely pure and transparent. From it great waves of golden sunlight pour in floods over cheery market-places and come streaming through the windows of great Gothic cathedrals. The heat and labour of the year are over, and the world is filled with a sense of gossip and holiday. With October the aspect of things becomes

more subtle, the sensation they give more rarefied. Who can tell aright of the changing wonderland of the mists, the pale sunshine of All Souls' Day, the late autumn trees' rare gold?

Mr. Le Gallienne says much in particular of the aspects of the sky. In Fenland, where the writer lives, the skies are always wonderful—it is the distinction of the flat country—and this year, and especially this August, they have been such that the fear of missing them might well lead the most irreconcilable irredentist to postpone the liberating assassination. We wish we could put down some of these sky-pictures in words. There have been thunder skies of black, of bronze, of green. We saw lately against a black bank of cloud, through which the sun broke, a swarm of white butterflies that beat and fluttered like snow-flakes. There was one sky memorable above all, a sky of the Second Coming, with all the pomp and panorama of the clouds, clouds like towers, like domes, like mountains, like phantom armies, like flying dragons of bronze upon a background of blue marble.

THE ASPECTS OF THINGS

But such grandiose aspects of Nature touch us less than homely humanized things. The writer confesses that he would give much of the glory of seas and skies and mountains for one little pleasant, friendly, tinkling market-town. The suggestion of mountains, for instance, is that they are eternal or, at any rate, are the exhibition of part of a process that is eternal. But to many of us the Eternal only becomes really interesting, only becomes vital, as it touches the transient. The real interest of the road is that we pass by it. Its charm and fascination is that it will still be there for the passage of other way-farers when we have left it for ever. We come from Nature, like and yet unlike the rest of natural things ; we pass and she remains. From the very beginning of our passage there fall upon our spirits strong influences from the mother from whom we come and to whom we return. The recurring charm of natural sights and sounds is above all one of remembrance. Who does not know how the look of things, the smell of the earth, the changes of the year, wake in us automatically, irresistibly, the very same

OLD-WORLD ESSAYS

sensations which they did in earliest childhood?

It is the sense of human transitoriness, of the passing of the generations that have dwelt in them, that give the charm, the feeling of something unchanging in the midst of change, but owing its interest and its beauty to the change that we find in old-time places. In one's own small experience one knows the sensation of coming back some autumn morning to one's childhood's country town. There are the same flowers in the gardens, there is the same sunshine on the old houses, but they are all new people, and the kind old priest is gone. The sense of all the great past is but the intensification and accumulation of the sense of our own little individual past.

Mr. Le Gallienne, amid his many merits, has the great one of quoting from the late Walter Pater. There was never a more sensitive and accurate observer, a more sympathetic and imaginative recorder of the aspects of things, than the author of *Marius*. Here is a charming little picture from that book :—

‘ The room in which he sat down to supper, unlike the ordinary Roman inns at that day, was trim and sweet. The firelight danced cheerfully upon the polished three-

THE ASPECTS OF THINGS

wicked lucernæ, burning clearly with the best oil, upon the whitewashed walls, and the bunches of scarlet carnations set in glass goblets. The white wine of the place put before him, of the true colour and flavour of the grape, and with a ring of delicate foam as it mounted in the cup, had a reviving edge and freshness he had found in no other wine.'

In this clean, bright little bit of writing, out of materials known only through his own present, white-washed walls, glass goblets, red carnations, and the like, Pater constructs a scene of the far past. He took the picture no doubt from some nineteenth-century way-side Roman inn. In such an inn Apostles may have rested on their toilsome journeys over Roman roads, and the shadow of Peter may have fallen on just such white-washed walls.

Nowhere better does Pater bring before one the aspects of things, and convey the sensations with which they are laden, than in *Gaston Latour*. The reader will remember how Gaston and his companions travel from Northern France into the wine country. One sees and feels it all, the first vineyards, the frosty mornings and chill evenings, the October sunshine.

OLD-WORLD ESSAYS

Gaston and his companions have long passed by, but the roads remain, the cathedrals and the vineyards are still there, the mists and the sunshine. Mr. Le Gallienne calls his book *Vanishing Roads*: but the roads remain; it is we that vanish.

HISTORY AND LIFE

THE writer of these lines remembers a dictum of his father's, frequently repeated in times of stress and controversy, domestic or of wider import : ' Well, here we are.' We were reminded of this saying, which appears to us to go down to the bed-rock of truth and reality, by some remarks which we recently came across in a novel of Mr. Gilbert Cannan's. ' For after all,' Mr. Cannan remarks, or rather makes one of his characters remark, ' what matters to us all, both individually and collectively, is daily life. History is concerned with the rather absurd and theatrical doings of a few people, which after all have never altered the fact that we do all of us live on from day to day, and only want to be left alone.' These words have a singular truth and force at the present time. The people of Europe want to go on living, not to be destroyed. To live is to pursue the activities proper to one's nature, to be unhindered

and unthwarted in their exercise. To live is to create. The life of Europe is expressed in the architecture of Europe, in its pictures ; the history of Europe is for the most part the record of the ever-renewed attempt, under one pretext or another, at its destruction. Life is triumphant ; it is never destroyed ; indeed it is indestructible, but it is cruelly injured, hindered, limited, thwarted, retarded, from age to age. It is not too much to say that the life of Europe is something which has persisted in spite of the history of Europe. There is nothing happy or fruitful anywhere but witnesses to the triumph of life over history. History, with its wars, battles, sieges, massacres, revolutions, is the destroyer, masking its destructions under various specious and high-sounding names, glory, empire, prestige, patriotism, and the like. The greatest enthusiasts for these abstractions have generally been persons at a considerable distance from the convulsions aroused by them. The people on the spot simply wanted to escape the storm. They wanted to be let alone, as Mr. Cannan says, to be left in peace to cultivate their own

HISTORY AND LIFE

little patches of vineyard. The plans of the high politicians, so far as any hint or suspicion of them got abroad among the common people, were felt as black clouds of menace rolling up and darkening their clear sky. Wars and rumours of wars have never been anything else than a black threat of anxiety and trouble to the fathers and mothers, the young men and maidens of Europe. In conscript countries, however convinced the people may be of the necessity of conscription, it is looked upon by them as a horrible hindrance to and interruption of life.

Think of Europe as Turner saw it. He was not a conscript; he was spared the ignominy and the suffering which darkens and lays waste the youth of Europe at this hour. He was a free man in that better day: he could go about and see Europe, and he was gloriously able to record and perpetuate what he saw. Think of the Europe which he saw and recorded, the Europe which had not been destroyed by the dynasts, conquerors, and patriots of so many centuries, the market-places glowing with light and colour, shrill, animated, heaped up with the

OLD-WORLD ESSAYS

good things of the plentiful and fertile earth, the old carved houses, the sculptured churches, the people of each province with their own costumes, their own varied living speech. The record of the life of Europe in general is to be found in pictures. It is delightful to think that in spite of Spanish furies, French furies, furies of fire and slaughter of all sorts that a peaceful Dutch interior looked like that, that there were such merry tavern-scenes, that the Rhine-wine was that colour of the tall glasses, that such happy little dogs ran about the floor. In spite of the wars there were still strolling players, and jolly kermesses and merry-makings. The old life of Europe, after all, went on largely unaffected by the wars and politics which never destroyed it, though they so cruelly interrupted it here and there—that life of which the happy leisure flowered on the painted sails of Venetian fishing-boats and sobbed and laughed in the lilt of Norman folk-songs. Turner's Europe may well seem a vision hanging in enchanted air, but we have all seen something of the old Europe of the happy little towns, of the Alpine meadows, of the contented people,

HISTORY AND LIFE

the fishermen and vine-dressers, of the fêtes and pardons, the Sunday farces and guignols.

Well, the point is, that it is in spite of its history that the life of Europe has survived. If a single church is standing, if the vines are green on any hill-side slope, if life persists, if happiness and the creative faculty again and again struggle up and reappear, no thanks are due to the conquerors, the world-politicians, the imperialists of vast conceptions and designs. You come at nightfall of a summer day, say, to a little Flemish town, and put up at the Inn of the Pear-Tree. Of this tree the whole countryside is proud. As you sit at the open window of your room the chimes of the carillon in the belfry float through the night across the square. The belfry is six hundred years old. The chimes have sounded through the wars and tumults of six hundred years. But no thanks are due to Alva, Marlborough, or Napoleon that the pear-tree grows green and clothes itself with blossom every spring, that the belfry is still standing, that the people of the town adapting themselves to the changes forced upon them through the years, still go their pleasant way

OLD-WORLD ESSAYS

beneath it. It is in spite of Charles the Bold and Alva, of Marlborough and of Prince Eugene, of Wellington and Blücher, that men have gone on making things and planting trees, and saving such of their treasures as they could from the whirlwind of destruction that from time to time enwrapped them.

‘History is concerned,’ says Mr. Cannan, ‘with the absurd and theatrical doings of a few people.’ History is the affair of kings and conquerors; life is the affair of the people. The sense of real life can perhaps best be seized and tasted in the popular language of any country, the speech so concrete, so intimate, so personal, so far removed from grandiloquent abstractions and ambitions, of the happy little communities who only wanted to be let alone and to go on living. Take the homely names of the homely little trades—that of a cobbler, for instance, in any language, the ‘savetier,’ the ‘ciabbatiere,’ the ‘soutar’—how apt and expressive the words are, how the names fit the thing like a glove, what a sense of reality and first-hand knowledge there is about them! The sky may grow black with clouds conjured

HISTORY AND LIFE

up in the name of abstractions—we understand but dimly what it is all about, but this art and mystery remains the same. The legions thunder past ; we are transferred from one duchy or principality to another ; and we go on clouting and amending poor men's shoes.

In the great creative artists, the genius of a people reaches its fullest and most complete expression. This is the flowering of the common sense, of the sense of reality diffused among the whole people. The artist, the 'maker,' possesses and expresses the characteristics of the people from whom he springs in the highest possible degree. The face of such an artist is no doubt the typical face of his people. Who can doubt that the face of Perugino, the face of the young Raffaele was the typical face of Umbria, a personification of Umbria ? The life of Umbria is in their pictures. The history of Umbria, of any medieval Italian State, is but a record of treacheries, slaughters, Sinigaglia massacres, and the like, that possesses no abiding significance. Leonardo is driven from the Court of one princeling to another, his great works are destroyed, but he is the soul of the life of

OLD-WORLD ESSAYS

Italy. He had great styles and titles, the Borgia captain Cæsar Dux Romandiolæ, he filled the world with rumour and with weeping ; but dust and silence lie upon him and his like. They added nothing to life.

In contrast to these destroyers, one likes to think of the companies of strolling players who through the war-wasted centuries have traversed the world of history, representing and interpreting the world of life. Little accounted of by the great ones of the earth, harassed, interrupted by the world's confusions, they have gone everywhere quickening human vision and sympathy, witnessing amid the noisiest and most turbulent distractions to the things, or rather the one thing which matters and remains.

Life remains. History passes ; its heaviest and most grievous passages have their period. If at the present time the interruption of life and happiness seems more cruel, the catastrophe more universal than any that had preceded it, this also will pass. The ruin and confusion of the earth are transient and on the surface ; her pregnant bosom is still filled with the forces of undying life.

POEMS, BAD AND GOOD

IN these times of storm and stress, it is pleasing to find a writer in a daily newspaper who has preserved the leisure and detachment of mind requisite for the discussion of such a subject as poetry. The genial humorist who daily contributes a column to the *Daily News* under the heading 'Sub Rosa' has more than once lately devoted his space to this theme. He recently took occasion to refer to the alleged inferior quality of the poetry written *apropos* of the war. A correspondent, smarting under a sense of injustice, thereupon wrote to the effect that the fault was not that of the poets, but of the editors who filled their columns with rubbish and returned the really noble and worthy poems with thanks.

'Have we any evidence,' this gentleman asks, 'that any London editor knows the difference between the poetry a man of genius

writes and the drivel written, say, by the late or present Poet Laureate? If we judge by what they publish, we must conclude either that the editors are utter idiots, or that no true poetry is written in these days. But what about the poetry they decline with thanks? I feel rather bitter about that.' 'The Sunday before last,' he adds, 'I addressed four meetings (presumably recruiting meetings), in all about ten thousand people. At each meeting I recited a poem of mine, called "Retreat," *re* the Russian retreat. On each occasion I told the people that, of its kind, no greater poetry had ever been written by any man in any language, a claim they endorsed by acclamation. Yet, were it sent to any newspaper, it would certainly not appear.'

We are inclined to question whether this gentleman's poems are really as good as he thinks they are. It appears to us that, however great his poetic faculty may be, at any rate his present frame of mind is not one favourable to what is commonly, but we believe quite erroneously, described as the 'making' of poetry. The poet's mind should

POEMS, BAD AND GOOD

be in a state of tranquil, unharassed receptivity if a poem is to be born from it or spring from it ; the mirror which is to receive the image should not be blurred or tarnished by feelings of personal bitterness or disappointment. The reveries of Wordsworth were worlds away from the broodings of wounded vanity.

By a curious coincidence, the same issue of the *Daily News* contained a bright little sketch entitled 'The Birth of a Sonnet.' Three holiday undergraduates on the river concoct a farcically bad poem, or rather, one of them does so, amid the friendly banter of the other two. This sonnet possesses all the characteristics of a bad poem in such a very high degree that it may be worth while to quote it in full. We commend it to those amateurs of whom we have recently heard whose hobby is the collection of bad poems. It is addressed to the River Thames, and runs as follows :—

' Emblem of truth and purity and might,
Of work accomplished and of work untold,
O bear thou on thy ceaseless load of mould
To form new continents ; the future site

OLD-WORLD ESSAYS

Of post-historic man and troglodyte,
Where now is waste of waters uncontrolled,
A myriad, myriad lives are in thy hold,
Keep thou thy sacred charge; forbear to blight.
So thought I as I left yon moss-grown spot,
And followed where thy waters race pell-mell
Past banks of thyme and blue forget-me-not
On their eternal task. How trivial
The works of man! An engine-house! Great Scott!
Thou art up-pumped to feed the dank canal!'

'Up-pumped' is good. The poem itself is pumped up from a depth of inner vacuity. It has no correspondence or relation whatever with anything seen or felt by the poet. There is no reason in the world why it should have been written at all. Joke as it is, it is a gorgeous specimen of the whole genus of bad poems. It, however, does not seem to us much worse than many far more ambitious productions. We will not mention names—we do not wish to write ourselves down heretics and philistines or disappointed rhymesters like the critic of the drivel of the last and present Laureates, but we confess there are poems by very reputable and considerable authors which appear to us 'pumped-up.' There seems to be no compelling reason for their existence at all.

POEMS, BAD AND GOOD

The bad poems are spun out of the writers' heads. But let a man see three white ducks waddle across the village green in the sunshine, and unselfishly delight in the sight, and express his delight in the first words that come, and it will not be a bad poem, very likely a triumphantly good one. The great mark of bad poetry is effort. The bad poets strive and cry, they toil and spin, they take thought. Good poetry comes without observation. The sunset glows for Wordsworth behind the yew-trees of a Westmorland churchyard, and it is not merely a sunset, but a poem written in letters of fire. The rainbow comes and goes, and good poetry comes in the same way. Let us think for a moment of the peculiar greatness of Wordsworth. Going about in his continual reverie, impressions from the outer world were constantly borne in upon his mind, and immediately translated themselves into verse. He was much derided in his own day because these impressions came to him from such very simple things. What a perfect poem, for instance, 'The Reverie of Poor Susan' is !

OLD-WORLD ESSAYS

' 'Tis a note of enchantment ; what ails her ? She sees
A mountain ascending, a vision of trees ;
Bright volumes of vapour thro' Lothbury glide,
And a river flows on thro' the Vale of Cheapside.'

But the eye of the bad poet is turned inward. The outer world does not exist for him. From his own mind he labours to shape his work of art. It may be objected that a sonnet, at any rate, must be to some extent a manufacture, not a birth, or growth, or revelation. A sonnet must be something fabricated. But a Wordsworth sonnet is at once, so to speak, both architectural and spontaneous. In the present writer's opinion, the sonnet on 'Westminster Bridge' is the most perfect and miraculous poem existing in any language. Another very lovely example of an artificially symmetrical poem is 'Charles of Orleans.'

' Le temps a laissé son manteau.'

The truth of the matter appears to be that the poet is a seer. Poetry is vision. The complement of this vision, the other side of it, is expression. The two things are one ; they cannot exist separately, at least in any very high degree. The poet is the alchemist

POEMS, BAD AND GOOD

who without effort instantaneously transmutes vision into expression. The vision is of real things ; in the act of seeing, the poet gives them to us in their essence. Let us quote Wordsworth again, the sonnet, ' Where lies the land to which yon ship must go ? '

' Yet still I ask what haven is her mark ?
And almost as it were when ships were rare
(From time to time like pilgrims here and there
Crossing the waters), doubt and something dark,
Of the old sea, some reverential fear,
Is with me at thy farewell, joyous bark ! '

The sense of what the sea was to the ancient world is here conveyed in a marvellous way. No amount of luxuriant verbiage compensates for the lack of vision. Non-seers heap up words in the effort to describe the unrealized or even the non-existent.

For our own part, we have always held that in a good poem the idea and the words are born together. A good poet never ' gets ' an unembodied idea and then ' works it out ' in words. However good the idea is, unless there is a nucleus of words in which it comes enwrapped it remains unrealized. There is always, so, at least, we believe, some germ or

core of words which gathers other words to itself until the poem is completely evolved. The gathering words may sometimes appear to bring the idea with them as they come, though it is probably always latent in the first words. The words come first, or, at any rate, the words and the idea come together; the idea comes clothed in words.

The groundwork of poetry, we repeat, is vision. The work of the poet is to see things and to reveal them to us. He sets down what he sees, often some simple natural thing, and he conveys its magic. He conveys its magic, because it is full of magic, and he sees it as it is, and he sets it down as he sees it. Coleridge is perhaps our greatest English magician. Among modern and minor people Mr. Walter de la Mare has a magical faculty of seeing. But take a verse or two of a poem of Théophile Gautier's 'Le Départ des Hironnelles.' The poem is marred here and there by the use of outlandish exotic words (probably due to the poet's habit of reading the dictionary), and it contains (in the last stanza) one line of pure prose, 'Comme dans le chanson de Rückert,' which we question if even

POEMS, BAD AND GOOD

a bad poet would have written in England.
But listen to this :—

‘ La pluie au bassin fait de bulles
Les hirondelles sont sur les toits,
Elles tiennent conciliabules ;
Voici l’hiver ; voici les froids.’

‘ Elles s’assemblent par centaines. . . .’

So it goes on triumphantly. The poet raises the listener to the height of his entire and luminous perception. He sets down the bare fact, apparently in the first words that come to hand ; but in them there is the rustle of hundreds of wings. We say, ‘ apparently the first words,’ but here we touch on a mystery. *Poema nascitur.*

RUSSIAN FAIRY TALES

CHILDREN and all child-like peoples devise for themselves a wonder-world beyond and behind the real world—a land east of the sun, west of the moon—a land, to quote one of the stories in Mr. Bain's book, 'far, far behind the blue sea, behind the fiery abyss in the void places, in the midst of the pleasant meadows.' These words are full of the enchantment of Russian magic, and may serve as a sort of key-note to all these books. The Russians are a people of dreamers. Michelet says somewhere that they are really a southern people, lost and shivering in the waste solitudes of the North, and that their one dream and longing is the sun. He instances the diminutives, of which Russian is even fuller than Italian, as a proof of their essentially southern character. The Russian wonderland is full of gorgeous colour. Old

RUSSIAN FAIRY TALES

Russia dreamed of blue seas, of enchanted islands, of sacred cities, of cypress woods, of silver ships, of marble belfries. The nurses lulled the Tsarevitch Alexis to sleep with songs and stories of all these things. Into this wonder-world all the books mentioned above introduce the reader.

In his introduction to another collection of tales, Mr. Magnus points out 'the peculiar conventions in the narration':—

'Such are the little forewords with their sardonic musings; the conclusion of almost every happy tale that the narrator was at the feast, but might never taste the viands; the references to the distances which the hero must go, which the narrator has not the knowledge to estimate accurately; the references to the land of these wonderful happenings, "the thrice-ninth land, the thrice-tenth kingdom," and many other traditional stylisms.'

These refrains occur continually in the narrative. To quote an example from the 'Tale of Ivan Tsarevitch':—

'And as he went on the road and way—it may be near, it may be far, it may be high, it may be low, the tale is soon told, but the deed is not soon done—at last he reached an open field and green meadows.'

This suggests that the manner of the telling of these tales is an exact and beautiful art,

OLD-WORLD ESSAYS

handed down by tradition from generation to generation. They are not told by anybody in any haphazard sort of way, but the telling of them is no doubt a ritual. The raconteur, more probably the raconteuse, is the possessor of a long-descended art. We listen to Babouchka in the long winter evenings. We see the traditional gestures that she makes, the quick expressive motion of her hands—we hear the peculiar cadence of her recitative—the quick hurrying over of the ever-repeated refrain, ‘It may be long, it may be short,’ and the like—the pausing and dramatic intensity at the crucial points of the story. The wonders she tells take place not only at great distances in space, ‘the thrice-ninth lands, the thirtieth kingdom,’ but also in time ‘beyond distant times,’ it is often said. All this fantastic world is a setting for the legendary heroes, and saints, and the holy shrines of Russia. We give ourselves up to the spell, and sail down the sacred river and see the domes of Kieff.

In these Russian fairy-tales, as Mr. Magnus points out, there are no ‘fairies’ in the Teutonic or Celtic sense of a separate race of

RUSSIAN FAIRY TALES

beings. He adds that there are no personifications of Nature. We do not think this last observation is borne out by an examination of Russian fairy-tale books taken altogether. There is, for example, the delightful story of 'The Twelve Months,' in the late Mr. Curtin's *Fairy Tales of Eastern Europe*. (There is, by the way, in the introduction to this book a most interesting account of Mr. Curtin's life and work. We confess his name is new to us. He seems to have been a linguist and student worthy to be ranked with Borrow, and Burton, and Palmer, and Neale.) In this story Marushka is sent in mid-winter by her wicked stepmother and stepsister into the forest to find violets. She wanders in the deep snow, weeping bitterly :—

' At last off in the distance, she saw a bright light. She went towards it, and ascending a hill she came to a fire ; around the fire on twelve stones, sat twelve men ; three old men with long white beards, three somewhat younger, three in years of manhood, and three beautiful youths. They were sitting in silence and looking calmly on the fire. They were the Twelve Months. . . . December rose from his seat, went to the youngest month and said, " Brother March, sit in the first place." March took the highest place, and waved the sceptre above the fire ; that instant the fire burned more

OLD-WORLD ESSAYS

powerfully. The snow thawed ; buds appeared on the branches, and grass grew green beneath the trees—flowers began to open—Spring had come. In the thickets violets were blooming ; there were so many that they were like a blue carpet. “ Quick, Marushka, pick them,” said March.’

The next day Marushka is sent for strawberries, and June performs the same service for her, and the day following for apples which are provided by September. The word-pictures of the times of violets, of strawberries, and of apples are very charming.

The stories frequently turn on the possession by the hero or heroine of some object which is ‘ *fée*,’ that is, endowed with magical properties. There is, for instance, the story of ‘ The Silver Saucer and the Crystal Apple,’ possessed by the Little Fool :—

‘ She whispered, “ Roll, roll, little Apple, on the silver saucer, and show me all the cities and the fields, all the woods and the seas, and the heights of the hills and the fairness of heaven.” Then the apple rolled about on the saucer ; a transparency came over the silver ; and on the saucer one after the other, all the cities became visible, all the ships on the seas, and the regiments in the fields, and the heights of the mountains and the beauties of the sky. Sunset appeared after sunset, and the stars gathered in their nocturnal dances ; it was all so beautiful and so lovely as no tale can tell and no pen can write.’

RUSSIAN FAIRY TALES

This last phrase, by the way, is one of the recurring refrains. Russian folk-fancy is full of the desire to evoke the vision of the fair distant world—‘the white world,’ they call it. A more uncommon means of doing this than the use of a crystal globe or magic mirror is told of in one of Mr. Curtin’s tales, ‘The Town of Nothing.’ This was a dulcimer, if one string of which was touched the blue sea would come ; if a second, ships would sail ; if the third, men would fire cannon from the ships. The present writer confesses that since the beginning of the war he has meditated a ballad, which has never taken actual shape, which should turn on the possession of a magical mirror by the Kaiser, in which were to be seen the sights of land and sea. He looks in it, and sees, now frozen corpses in deep snow ; now a woman killed at midnight in a dark prison ; now a great church in flames ; now a stretch of the Adriatic on which floats a wrecked fishing-boat of Chioggia, with torn butterfly sails, while the blue water runs red with the blood of Beppino, the curly-headed, whistling fisher-boy. The fate of the Emperor is somehow bound up

OLD-WORLD ESSAYS

with that of the mirror, so that when it is broken his evil power comes to an end.

These books are full of the most curious Russian folk-lore and cast great light on the popular Russian religion. The three Holy Persons who ceaselessly walk the roads of the Russian land are Christ Himself, St. Nicholas, the wonder-worker, and the Prophet Elias. Our Lord often appears as an old man, or as the most wretched and shabby of beggars. This is quite in accordance with Eastern ideas. The Western Church dwells on the little Child, the beautiful Youth, the perfection both of youth and maturity at the age of thirty-three. There is a popular phrase, as at Amiens '*le beau Dieu.*' '*Thou art fairer than the children of men,*' says the West. The East replies, '*He has neither form nor comeliness, and when we see Him there is no beauty that we should desire Him,*' and even represents Him as deformed. The ideas of the Ancient of Days, of Eternity, of the Divine Wisdom, are all sympathetic with the figure of an old man. But the Russian Christ is a great figure of charity. We like the story in which He gives a soldier

RUSSIAN FAIRY TALES

a pack of cards with which he will win whenever he plays. The Biblical East invokes the Saints of the Old Testament. 'In Novgorod,' Mr. Magnus tells us, 'there were two churches, to St. Elias of the Drought, and St. Elias of the Rain, to be consulted as occasion required.' St. James tells us 'Elias . . . prayed earnestly that it might not rain, and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months, and he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit' (St. James v. 17-18). There is no specific place of Purgatory in the Eastern dogma, but in these tales people who are 'good in the main' (as an old friend of the writer expresses it), but unsatisfactory in details of conduct, go to hell for a time. Death is personified as in the Breton figure of the 'Ankou,' but in Russia the personification is feminine. A very curious piece of folk-lore is that, as long as Death stands at the foot of the sick person's bed he may recover, but if she stands at the head, there is no hope.

The *Byliny Book* is a book of the past, a book of 'what has been,' a book of ballads

OLD-WORLD ESSAYS

and sagas about the mythical heroes of Russia, Ilya and Mikúla and the rest. Miss Harrison, in her preface, tells us about the village minstrels in far-away places singing these songs on winter nights. She tells us that the young people will not learn to sing these songs because they are 'grammar people,' who can read books themselves. 'What a pity!' she adds, and for our part we quite agree with her. The *Russian Picture Tales*, charmingly illustrated by Valery Carrick, are concerned entirely with the doings of animals. Animals play a great part in all the books, and are always regarded as persons. The crow is addressed as 'Voron Voronovitch,' as who should say 'Crow Crowson.' 'A crow of evil omen' is a common Russian expression, an exact rendering of the Italian 'corvo di mal augurio.' Mr. Curtin gives a delightful story of a talking cat who 'told tales about deacons and priests.' We should like to possess this cat, and should much enjoy its company. The cock in these stories is always a bird of good omen, and generally manages to get his own way.

We extract the following note from the

RUSSIAN FAIRY TALES

much-scribbled margin of a copy of a *Commentary on the Psalms*, which is the most prized of all our books :—

‘ There is an ancient Russian story that in the middle of the night when the Angels take the sun from the Throne of God and carry it to the East, the cherubims strike with their wings, and on earth every bird palpitates with joy, and the cock awakes, and beats his wings prophesying light to the world.’

Mr. Magnus gives a version of this story, which is of ancient origin ; ‘ the language,’ he says, ‘ is very antique.’

But we think more charming than such fancies is the story of the Tsarevna, who sought for her lost Tsar, disguised as a wandering guslyár, or player of the gusli, a kind of dulcimer. The word ‘ gusli ’ suggests some lovely instrument, made for wild Russian music. . . .

TWO CORNISH FRESCOES

THE present writer recently received two picture postcards from a friend in Cornwall. They arrived in the afternoon, and laying all other care aside, he spent the rest of the day in meditation upon them. There is, indeed, matter for much reflection in these pictures. They depict two renderings of the story of St. Christopher painted upon the walls of the Church of Poughill, near Bude. The reason for the repetition of the subject is said to be that in the original picture the artist confused the Saint with King Olaf, and represented him with a crown. This was corrected in another painting, that on the south wall of the Church, in which he wears a gorgeous jewelled Byzantine halo. (Personally, we think we like these heavy gold plates for heavenly wear almost better than Perugino's rims of light.) The writer

TWO CORNISH FRESCOES

has never himself seen these frescoes, is ignorant of their date, and can give no details about them. He can only testify to the deep refreshment and pure delight which these copies give him, and which it seems to be the peculiar property of the old symbolic painting to impart to the spirit of man. There is something in it which at once illuminates and feeds the mind.

The medieval painters loved the world, but they saw it with a supernatural light upon it. In the sixteenth century Art became a merely worldly thing. Men painted the world better, but the light that once really was on land and sea had faded from them. On the other hand, religion became merely devout. The jolly legendary Saints were supplanted by the severe professionals of the Catholic Reaction. We suppose these pictures may have been painted in the good day of Hans Memling and Jan Van Eyck. They are full of the twin blessed spirits of fantasy and common sense. St. Christopher, a figure of great dignity and beauty (notably in the first painted picture), has around him the setting of a whole Pre-Raphaelite world.

OLD-WORLD ESSAYS

The first thing that strikes one about these frescoes is a certain completeness of imagination, that great mark of the Middle Ages. The present writer himself once made a ballad of St. Christopher, and he here confesses with shame that it never occurred to him to give the hermit a lantern. Not to have thought of such an elementary concrete thing argues a sort of blindness. This blindness, this want of common sense, seems to belong peculiarly to our own time. In present-day hotels, for instance, the bedroom candlestick has disappeared, killed by the electric light, though assuredly the need for it is as great as ever. In antiquity, in the Middle Ages, in the eighteenth century people had light to go to bed by. But in our own day, in pretentious hostelries with all their pomp and paraphernalia of lifts, telephones, and electricity, again and again one gropes one's way to bed in the dark. You go up dimly-lighted stairs, stumble through passages and corridors in total darkness, endeavour to guess at your room, give up the idea, descend again in search of a *conciierge* or at any rate a match. If you succeed in finding your

TWO CORNISH FRESCOES

room without help, again the electric light button has to be groped for. In that beautiful detail of the hermit's lantern held up above the dark flood over which St. Christopher bears his sacred Burden, one sees the capacity of the Middle Ages for the thinking out of things, the common sense informing all their fantasy. The individual medieval artist would probably not himself have thought of all these details. One cannot think of everything, as they say. But they had all been thought out for him. He depended upon, he was supported by, a tradition which was itself an embodied common sense. But where is the common sense, the comfort, the enlightenment of a world without bedroom candlesticks? To this have we come amid all our profusion of mechanical appliances.

This completeness of imagination is again shown in the representation of the stream. It is not merely a pretty stream, a gloomy stream, any stream, some particular stream. This stream is cosmical; it flows from the world's heart. It bears upon it and within it all that move in the waters. There go

the ships ; and such ships ! They are the ships of St. Ursula. Who does not know, by the way, how a fleet of fishing boats at rest in their harbour seems to be a singing choir, to make a harmony ? How often a discord is brought in, the beauty and the happiness of such a scene is marred by the presence of a 'destroyer' or some such hideous and hateful monster in the midst of it. But in this cosmic river which flowed from Eden in the beginning, there are no such things. Its ships are 'noble Christian merchantmen to sail upon the seas,' as Mary Howitt says, or fishing boats that let down their nets for a draught. In both pictures the river teems with fish. But the most delightful detail of all is a mermaid, golden-haired, white-breasted, silver-scaled, who in the first picture swims between St. Christopher's legs. In one hand she holds a mirror, with the other she combs her hair. This fancy of the mermaid again is something one would never have thought of. Often, indeed, in old ballads and pictures one does come on things which it seems one would never by any possibility have thought of !

TWO CORNISH FRESCOES

But neither would the old painters and makers have thought of them by or of themselves. They were a part of the tradition—they were there for them. The mermaid no doubt came into this picture from Greece, by way of Byzantium. She belongs to the same world as Proteus rising from the sea, and old Triton with his wreathèd horn. The creatures of the Greek mythology as well as the poets and sages of antiquity had a place in the popular imagination, and found their way into Christian pictures.

We are inclined to think that there was in the Middle Ages an imaginative conception of the world, a tradition of its history, if not shared by everybody, at any rate very widely diffused, and, of course, the common property of artists of all sorts. It was as much a part of their outfit as their brushes and colours. There was a mental picture of the great outstanding figures, who were not merely names, but who were realized in their habit as they lived, or, at least, according to the traditional representations of them. In Southern and Eastern Europe, possibly to some extent in Celtic countries,

we believe that this still exists. To give an instance which may perhaps be thought trivial : we remember being told by a Russian or Polish barber in the course of his operations, that ' the philosopher Aristotle always shaved his head.' How did the man pick up such a curious little detail about a philosopher of four-and-twenty centuries ago ? It may have been gathered from some book or the recollection of some bust seen in a museum. We are bound to admit that we cannot recall anything of the kind ourselves. Neither, though it has been our lot to talk to many barbers on a great variety of subjects, did we ever come across another who found occasion to mention Aristotle at all. We think it probable that here we hit upon a fragment of an age-long tradition, coming through the Christian centuries, but embracing the mythological creatures, the gods and sages of antiquity, preserved at any rate in part in a pictorial form by the Byzantine icon-makers. Peasants of the Western Islands still speak of ' the Greek woman.' From this traditional store-house the old painters took their materials. The world for

TWO CORNISH FRESCOES

them was a great temple of which the walls were frescoed with the creations of the human fancy and the shapes of the illustrious dead.

In the serene atmosphere in which these pictures were painted, we are far from a world of greed and lust and blood. A Director of Propaganda of Liberal and Humane Ideas (if such a functionary existed) would do well to scatter these postcards about by hundreds of thousands. Liberalism, humanism, if you like (it is the same thing), is the sacred cause which poets serve. They diffuse a large unselfish view of things together with which Prussianism cannot live. To-day in these lovely frescoes we can find a parable. The stream through which St. Christopher strides, and in which the mermaid swims, is the world-stream. Black or leaden-grey by night, the dawn will show it grass-green and crystal clear, and in the full warmth and light of the sun it will take on such colours as were on the sea in the image of the world before the Creation, as it lay in the mind of God. The dumb giant, the great strong inarticulate common man, struggles through the ice-cold flood, carrying and

OLD-WORLD ESSAYS

saving for us all the precious Burden of Justice and freedom and peace. So at least we are told, and we try to believe it. We hope it is so. But it is still night, and we need the hermit's lantern. Is the hermit perhaps President Wilson? In the morning with the hermit's help we may see the Burden safely borne to shore, and the fair stream in all its colours, with its mermaids and fishing boats, its fruitful toil and happy fancy, but with no monsters of destruction and of death upon it.

STREET GAMES, OLD AND NEW

'YOU'LL not find much talk in these songs about sunshine and flowers and things like that, except in the older ones, which I think were used by boys and girls together, and perhaps even by grown-ups. The girls don't discover poetic things. . . . They're matter of fact. They sing about clothes and food and money.' So writes Mr. Norman Douglas in his new book, *London Street Games* (St. Catherine Press), which he himself describes as a 'breathless catalogue' of the games played by London children in the streets at the present day. Mr. Douglas enumerates about a thousand of these games, which, as he says, is 'not a bad number when you think that our children can only play when they come home from school or work, and that they hardly ever play on Sundays on account of their clothes, or in winter because

the evenings are too dark, and that the rain often keeps them indoors anyhow, and that the lads over fourteen don't play at all.'

Well, by fourteen it is no doubt time to put away childish things. But in the childish years, say from six to fourteen, many children live an odd imaginative life. Some are quite lost in it. The actual world around them is simply the material out of which they construct the inner world in which they really live. What sort of world that is, again, depends on the material available for its construction. It is a mere matter of fact which any one can verify for himself that children do not care for the elaborate toys, often ingenious, sometimes really beautiful, with which well-meaning elders seek to delight them. A lady of the writer's acquaintance says that toys are wasted upon children, and should be reserved for grown-up people. She herself on one occasion was perfectly fascinated by a highly finished box of soldiers, with its accurate regiments, guards and dragoons of all sorts, upon which the actual recipient only looked with a cold and distracted regard. Mr. Godfrey Blount's

STREET GAMES, OLD AND NEW

villages are the most lovely toys imaginable, but we suspect that they give more pleasure to grown-up people than to children. The child does not want everything done for him ; he likes to invent, to pretend, to make believe. He takes the commonest material and makes things for himself ; pies out of mud, castles out of sand. Fantasy comes into play ; the crab-shell is an Argo. Out of the child's realm of fantasy the rhyming game, we believe, comes. There are a certain number of traditional and classical rhymes, possibly many of them the spontaneous creation of children themselves ; these have been worked over, varied and embroidered in different times and places ; in modern days too often degraded and corrupted. Mr. Douglas's book shows that in our own time the creation of new rhyming games is still going on.

But the castles of fantasy are built out of the ordinary workaday material which the child finds to hand. We confess—we hope it is not unsympathetic and inhuman to say so—that we have found Mr. Douglas's catalogue of the present-day London street games squalid, sordid, and depressing. We

OLD-WORLD ESSAYS

look back on other days ; we see, within the world of history, through its changing ages, an inner world of rhyming, singing, dancing children. They dance and sing, they fill the evening streets, they are in a world of their own, one thinks, as unaffected by the contemporary tumults as the fish swimming round and round some lilled pond on that hot August night were by the slaughter and the cries of the St. Bartholomew.

‘ Oh ! blithe is Harfleur’s gathering gloam
When mothers call the children home.’

What games do they play, what are they singing ? What rhymes do they sing in the Conqueror’s Rouen, in Plantagenet London, in Villon’s Paris ? Something after this sort, we suppose :—

‘ Marguerite de Paris,
Prête-moi tes souliers gris
Pour aller en Paradis.’

Coming nearer to our own time, what was the world of street games within the great outside world of the Paris of the Revolution ? The old traditional games would still be played, but there would be a new element, something coarse and brutal, the mimicry

STREET GAMES, OLD AND NEW

of the guillotine. One likes to think of some shy old-world figure moving amid the scenes of the Terror, say, some frail, white-haired old man, a vendor of pink and green paper parasols. So we think the old games of knights and ladies and castles persisted. What were the street games of Charles Lamb's London? These were kind and whimsical, no doubt. Such rhymes, perhaps, as this :—

‘ As I was going to Strawberry Fair
I met a maiden taking the air.
Her eyes were blue and gold her hair,
As she went on to Strawberry Fair.’

Quoting this verse, Mr. Douglas annotates, ‘an old one.’ We hardly need to be told this. The old-world rhyming games dealt with happy and pleasant things, with chiming bells, with ships that come sailing in, with dukes that ride in May, with children dancing around mulberry bushes. What a beautiful little poem is—

‘ London Bridge is broken down
(My fair lady).’

So again is—

‘ Oranges and lemons,
The bells of St. Clement's,’

with its catalogue of the London bells.

OLD-WORLD ESSAYS

“ When I get rich,”
Say the bells of Shoreditch.’

These are street games of the old world. Many of these which survive, we suspect, have become corrupt as the sense of rhythm became weaker in the children of the modern world. The new rhymes are as different from the old as the discordant shriek of the modern newspaper boy is from the beautiful old traditional street cries. One would like to have a complete collection of the rhymes of old-world children’s games. We divine a whole realm of them in which the pilgrim comes from over-sea, and all the geese of Poitiers have marched on Angoulême, and the Princess in her pink silk gown walks up and down all day in a garden of picotees.

No doubt in the old days there were ugly and cruel rhymes and games, but the rhymes and games belonged for the most part to the kingdom of romance. There was also the world of faith. The words of a children’s rhyming game played at Seville, for instance, ran thus :—

“ A candle here ! ”
“ Over-there.”

STREET GAMES, OLD AND NEW

" A candle here ! "

" Other-where. "

" " Candle, a candle ! "

" Loss on loss. "

" Where is light ? "

" In the Holy Cross. " "

One need not say that of this in the modern London street games there is found no single trace. In general, in place of the romance of minstrels and troubadours, we have a realism as of juvenile Zolas. The material out of which the children's world of fancy is constructed is the life of East London. Here are some of the names of the present-day London street games :—Stiff-legged Copper, Stiff Bloaters, Flies round the Jam-Pot, Yank Him Over, Bumpums, Smashing your Grandma's Windows, Moggies on the Wall, Upsetting Mother's Gravy, Bung the Barrel, Picking the Bloater, Broken Bottle, Rotten Egg, Turning Mother's Wringer, Pork the Greens, What O ! She Bumps, and R. White's Ginger-Beer Goes Off Pop. Well, these are songs and games made out of the life the children know. But it seems a pity that the background of their fancy should be so uninspiring. We confess that we do not find

OLD-WORLD ESSAYS

these London street-rhymes exhilarating.
Here are some samples :—

‘ I know a washer-woman, she knows me ;
She invited me to tea.
Guess what we had for supper,
Stinking fish and bread and butter.’

Or (this is certainly more rhythmical) :—

‘ I had a bloke down hopping ;
I had a bloke down Kent ;
I had a bloke down Pimlico,
And this is what he sent.’

Or—

‘ Old Mother Roundabout,
Knocking all the kids about,
Outside Elsie’s door.
Up comes Elsie with a big stick
And lets her know what for.’

How acrid and banal is this for a rhyming
game :—

‘ I know a girl, sly and deceitful ;
Every little tittle-tat she goes and tells her people.’

The following seems a mere piece of
gratuitous ugliness :—

‘ What for supper, love ?
Squashed flies and blackbeetles.’

(There had been eggs for breakfast, roast
beef for dinner, and water-cress for tea.)

Sometimes there are echoes of old romance
like—

STREET GAMES, OLD AND NEW

‘ Queen Anne, Queen Anne, she sits in the sun,
As fair as a lily, as white as a swan.’

But they are greatly weakened and diluted by the surrounding squalor. The good old country songs like ‘ Oats and beans and barley grow ’ still survive, as do the counting-games like ‘ One, two, buckle my shoe.’ This seems to show a certain play of fancy :—

‘ Sally go round the moon,
Sally go round the sun,
Sally go round the omlihus
On a Sunday afternoon.’

Something of the old feeling is in the rhyme—

‘ I had a dolly dressed in green ;
I didn’t like her, I gave her to the queen ;
The queen didn’t like her, she gave her to the cat ;
The cat didn’t like her, because she wasn’t fat.’

Here are the fairy-tale atmosphere, the fairy-tale *dramatis personæ*. The following, again, has all the ritual of a true rhyming game :—

‘ The farmer’s in his den,
He I hedy ho !
The farmer wants a wife, etc.,
The wife wants a child, etc.,
The nurse wants a dog, etc.,
We all pat the dog, etc.’

This, which is no doubt an old one, is of the

OLD-WORLD ESSAYS

order of 'The House that Jack built' and the story of the old woman bringing her pig to market.

We have left no space to speak of the street games played with toys, tops, skipping ropes, hoops, marbles. These things have their seasons. This is still the case to some extent, even in London—though we are not surprised to hear that this is changing—and much more in happier country places. They come like the flowers, they appear in the streets, unfailingly, at the right time, like cowslips in May or sweet peas in July. In the first lengthening days of the New Year come the whipping tops. Skipping ropes appear at Easter. The late autumn sees the coming in of hopscotch, and hoops and marbles come in later still, at the beginning of winter. This probably follows a tradition centuries old. They say 'the pictures' are killing street games. We hope not, but at any rate it is pleasant to think of the generations of children expressing themselves more or less beautifully, in this perfectly natural and unsophisticated way.

A GOSSIP ABOUT SURNAMES

As a small boy the writer used occasionally to be sent on errands to the shop of a certain Mrs. Catchlove. It was a tiny, dreary little grocer's shop to which recourse was had in cases of emergency. Mrs. Catchlove, behind her counter as she tied up the parcel of tea or sugar, seemed humble but acidulous, cheerful but unhappy; in fact, the very personification of what has since been called 'a slave morality.' We remember wondering what the name meant. We dimly regarded it as the expression of something propitiatory, the attempt by a servile if somewhat acrid 'harmlessness' to capture the goodwill of the tea-buying public, and even of Higher Powers. But alas for the deceitfulness of appearances in words as in everything else! Professor Weekley, in his book on *Surnames* (John Murray), has answered our unspoken childish

question of more than forty years ago. 'Catchlove' seemed to represent a lower middle-class life, no longer robustious and jolly as in Dickens, but repressed and soured, taking the only revenge possible to it. 'The world hunts after wealth,' it had the air of saying, 'after fame, after pleasure; we will catch love.' But the original Catchlove was a hunter, not of love, but of wolves. 'Catchlove,' says Professor Weekley, 'from Chasse-loup, means wolf-hunter (Alan Cachleu, Pat. R.).' The name has a Norman ancestry behind it. It does not come from the Catacombs. The untrustworthiness of the look and sound of names was further illustrated by a butcher's shop at the corner of the same street. The owner's patronymic was 'Bircher.' One shuddered at the name, both as intrinsically hideous and as probably originally held by some official of Bumble-dom whose function had been the scourging of pauper children. The writer's father, who was a humanitarian of a somewhat violent type, took a very prejudiced view both of the name and its owner. Professor Weekley corrects this mistake also:—

A GOSSIP ABOUT SURNAMES

‘ The original Bircher was not an educationalist, but a shepherd (Alan le Bercher, Hund. R.), from *berger* (variants, *berchier*, *berquier*), Latinized as *bercarious* or *bercator* is one of the commonest entries in cartularies of manorial rolls (Martin Berearius, Cust. Battle Abbey ; Richard Bercator Geoffrey le Berkier, Testa de Nev.). It has usually become Barker, as in *Piers Plowman* :

“ Thyne berkeres ben all blynde that bringeth forth
thy lambren.” ’

We lay no claim to expert knowledge, but we strongly suspect, by the way, that the pronunciation of Norman-French, and, indeed, of all old French, was on a line with that of English as it is spoken at the present day—that it was not elusive, but what our own populace would call ‘ plain and straightforward.’ The subtilization of the language seems to have taken place in the middle of the seventeenth century. It was perhaps one of the refinements of the Court of the *Roi Soleil*. We have sometimes thought we have detected the beginnings of a reverse process taking place in spoken French. What will be the effect on the spoken language of the presence of hundreds of thousands of Englishmen in France at the present time ? The ‘ fluid ’ speech may again become ‘ solid.’ In the time of Catherine de Medici, for

instance, 'to roast the goose' would be spoken of as *rostir l'oye*, the words being pronounced much as they would be pronounced if they were English. In the next century 'to roast the goose' would be *rôtir l'oie*, pronounced in the modern French fashion. It is possible that in our own time there may be the marked beginning of a reversion to something like sixteenth-century French.

To give one or two other examples of the untrustworthiness of the look or sound of names: 'Snooks' for instance, represents the romantic and delightful 'Sevenoaks.' In our own experience, we remember sympathizing with the bearers of the name of 'Snushall.' But a very little investigation of the parish registers showed us that the name was in reality 'Sénéschal.' This was no doubt a Huguenot name, perhaps from Provence, the quick Provençal pronunciation, soon degenerating on the lips of Lincolnshire imitators into 'Snushall.' The district in which the writer lives, by the way, abounds in French names. Professor Weekley speaks of 'those who escaped the massacre of St. Bartholomew' as one great source of

A GOSSIP ABOUT SURNAMES

French emigration into this country. If the massacre of St. Bartholomew is thought of as extending to the year 1685, as it well may be, this of course is so. This foreign element was reinforced still later by French and Dutch engineers, and by the 'French prisoners.' We were speaking lately to a parishioner whom we had never heard called anything but 'Mrs. Bodger.' 'Bodger' itself is 'botcher,' a 'mender,' a 'repairer,' a 'patcher-up' we suppose of broken gates, fences and the like. 'And how is Bodger?' we enquired. 'Do you mean Mr. Parfrement?' was the unexpected reply. What 'Parfrement' means we do not know, nor amid all his wealth of material does Professor Weekley tell us. Lincolnshire people had evidently found themselves unable to grapple with 'Parfrement' and had substituted an appellation drawn from the occupation of the original bearer of the name. This man's appearance, by the way, is exactly that of a French peasant proprietor.

As an instance of the popular corruption of names we may mention the case of a clergyman named 'Brabazon' who was

OLD-WORLD ESSAYS

spoken of by his parishioners as 'brazenose.'

The origins of the descriptive surname, as Professor Weekley shows, are very various. They come from names of places, from peculiarities of personal appearance, from articles of costume, from all sorts of arts and crafts, occupations and callings, from the names of birds and beasts. It is delightful to find, for instance, that there was a 'Robert Pussekate' flourishing in Northumberland in the year 1265, three hundred years before 'pussy cat' is found in written English. The first bearer of the name may have been the owner of a cat like Dick Whittington's. In the Pipe Rolls (temp. Henry II) there is mention of a fishmonger named 'Henry Graspeys,' that is, fat fish, big fish, porpoise. In our own childish days we remember a fisherman known as 'old Roach,' who used to come to the house with prawns. 'Roach' is one of the very few surnames omitted by Professor Weekley from his exhaustive list. There used to be a proverb 'sound as a roach,' used often in those days, but which we have never heard since in any part of the land. Ford, in his 'Handbook to Spain,'

A GOSSIP ABOUT SURNAMES

refers it to St. Roch, so venerated by our medieval ancestors. The meaning would be 'sound as a sick man healed by St. Roch.' But the surname may come from the fish, some huge specimen of which its first owner may have caught. Still back in Plantagenet times there was a hostess in London named 'Agnes Bonetable.' The name speaks well for her, and for the gratitude of the travelling merchants whom she entertained. How pleasant these Norman-French names are ! What would one not give to get back through the centuries, and for one day hear Norman-French as a spoken tongue in England ! Or for the matter of that, Elizabethan English !

Great numbers of names are from trades and occupations. Still going back to our own childish days, there was a 'Mr. Isemonger,' a portly old gentleman with a distended waistcoat who lived in our street. This, of course, is 'iron-monger,' a seller of *eisen* or iron. 'Iremonger' again is a seller of eggs, the German *Eier*. It is pleasant to think that the seventeenth-century mystic, M. Olier, probably came from a line of prosperous oil-merchants of the Midi. Mysticism

and devotion have a background of human life. We do not find 'Coussmaker' (the Dutch stocking-maker) in Professor Weekley's list. A well-known family of this name came over with William the Dutchman. Some of the medieval descriptive names have a very hideous significance, for instance, 'Escorchevieille.' So Macaulay speaks of a West-country executioner after Sedgmoor receiving from the people 'the horrible name of Tom Boil-man.' But surnames had in his day become stereotyped, and the name did not cleave to his descendants. Names that have resounded through the world are sometimes found unexpectedly in humble places. There died some years ago, amid very poor surroundings, a Plantagenet, the last to bear the name. We were once startled by seeing above a cobbler's shop in a Picardy village the royal legend, 'Charlemagne.' There was little in the aspect of its occupant to suggest the great Emperor *à la barbe fleurie*. As in the case of Alexander, Cæsar, and the like, the name may have been first given to some one who sustained the rôle in some medieval pageant or play.

A GOSSIP ABOUT SURNAMES

So we can imagine the name 'Christus' sticking to the actor of the principal part in the Ober-Ammergau drama. Many names came from characters represented in the mystery and morality plays. The 'Bircher' of sinister suggestion already mentioned may have been at first a shepherd of the Nativity. There was a common expression in old France used of an arrogant, vainglorious boaster, 'C'est un Olibrius.' This was from Olibrius, the vaunting persecutor of St. Margaret in the miracle plays. How delightful it would be to come across 'Olibrius' emblazoned on a shop front of some little town of provincial France! Coming down to more modern days there are many names, once borne by considerable people, which are extinct, or well on their way to become so. We had never met or heard of any one bearing the name of 'Laud,' for instance, till we lately came across the name over a shop in a slum of an East Coast town. Wherever we travel, indeed, it is our practice to notice the names over the shops. They afford much food for reflection. Thus we recently came upon the name 'Mayde.' About this name there

is a point of curious interest. 'Maiden was used in Middle English,' we are told, 'for the unmarried of both sexes.' 'May' was a young man or a maiden. A 'John le Maide' made his will in London in 1279. St. John the Evangelist might well be spoken of as 'St. John the Maid.'

Professor Weekley gives a delightful list of obsolete names, English and old French, once found in England. On 'Bridebek,' for instance, he has this note: 'Cf. "Bridoye," the judge in Rabelais. Geese were bridled by pressing a feather through the orifices of the beak to prevent them straying through hedges. Hence "oison bridé: a sot, asse" (Cotgrave).' 'Chantemesse' still exists as a surname in France. In old England, 'Romfare' was a pilgrim to Rome and 'polprest' a shaver of tonsures. Many picturesque surnames of Norman-French origin are still extant in England, such are 'Bonhote,' 'Bonifant' (bon enfant), and 'Limage' (l'image). This would be the sign of an inn 'Hostellerie de l'Image.' We recently came across a very charming French surname, 'Millesaintes.' 'L'Apôtre' is found in France.

A GOSSIP ABOUT SURNAMES

We have never come across 'Sauveur' or 'Saviour' in England, though 'Heiland' is common in Germany. Mr. Weekley suggests that 'Nation' and 'Sumption' are Incarnation and Assumption.

Oath-names form an interesting class of surnames, of which a few remain at the present day—for example, Pardoe, Dando (*dent-Dieu*). People in the Middle Ages again were often nicknamed from some favourite phrase or expression which they continually used. We read of Peter Ouy and David Paraventure. An old acquaintance of our own, if his lot had been cast in medieval days, would certainly have been named 'Master Altogether.' It seems, by the way, that the phrase 'Al die werlt!' was used in medieval German as an exclamation of wonder and joy. It gives the present-day German surname 'Allewelt.' That this phrase should have been used as a sort of religious exclamation is very curious; it seems to indicate an underlying pantheism, an unconscious belief in the eternity of the world, an unacknowledged sense of its being all-embracing and satisfying.

OLD-WORLD ESSAYS

But such speculations are far-fetched. We like better to think of the old life of the people of Europe, the people of England, the people of Dickens, the people of Shakespeare, the people of the miracle plays, all the taverners and falconers and millers, and the rest, the innumerable people, all the Normans and Saxons of England, whose lives and thoughts are all about us still.

ON THE VULGAR TONGUE

'THE Vulgar Tongue' occupies a position of dignity in the English Baptismal Office. I have known curates to substitute the word 'English' for the phrase, whether with the purpose of greater intelligibility, or for the sake of avoiding the appearance of an aspersion upon the English language, I cannot say. The word 'vulgar' has fallen upon evil days, yet Dante's 'volgare,' for instance, was a by no means ignoble speech. For my own part, I confess to being a lover of the 'vulgar tongue' in the sense which the curate seeks to avoid—the actual speech of the great mass of the English people, or what was their speech up to a very recent date, the speech of the multitudinous world of Dickens—of Sam Weller, of Dick Swiveller, of Sairey Gamp; the language, too, of the eighteenth-century novels, the Restoration comedies.

This was also the speech, for instance, as we shall see directly, of Lady Lucy Pusey, the mother of the great saint and doctor of the English Church. How and when did this 'vulgar tongue,' this great living English 'volgare' become 'vulgar,' in the bad sense? I think when it was first used with a conscious snobbish sense of inferiority, when people whose mother-tongue it was ceased to talk naturally, and with a painful effort and many relapses into their vernacular, endeavoured to speak what was practically a foreign language. What remains of 'vulgar' English at the present day is bad in the further sense that it has lost its traditional character, its brawling, robustious, good-humoured, straightforwardness and downrightness. It has become anæmic, querulous, drawling. There is a certain house known to me, in which I frequently, of a Sunday afternoon, to my great delight, get back into the middle of the eighteenth century.

Dickens represented the speech of his people phonetically, but whatever the spelling in books, the English vulgus, the English people, all through the eighteenth and seventeenth

ON THE VULGAR TONGUE

centuries, had no doubt spoken in the same way. It was the old English language, not the degradation and corruption of a correctly spoken tongue. Professor Wyld in his new book, *A History of Modern Colloquial English* (published by Fisher Unwin), is very enlightening on all this. Before the majority of people knew how to write, spelling was apparently a convention of the professional 'scribes,' and affords little help in determining the sound of the spoken language. When people began to write their own letters they endeavoured to make the spelling render the actual sound of the words. The idea that 'good English' is English spoken according to the spelling dates from the middle of the eighteenth century, and is probably largely due to the influence of Dr. Johnson. Since his day people have been trying to construct a language from the received spelling. This tendency has become more marked with every decade, and the process of correcting the traditional spoken English by the spelling book has been enormously accelerated since 1870. Professor Wyld appears to dread (not it seems without reason) the further efforts in

this direction of 'the lettered democracy of the future.'

It is a mistake to suppose that the 'vulgar tongue' means the 'plebeian tongue.' The very last people to give it up were probably the county families. Lady Lucy Pusey, who died in 1859, well over ninety, to the day of her death never called her illustrious son anything but 'Ed'ard.' She also always said 'ooman' for 'woman.' Dickens's 'lower orders,' of course, always did so. But it was a mode of speech which they had in common with those whose family plate, so to speak, included a silver venison-dish. The greatest aristocrat I have ever known always said 'cowcumber,' like Sairey Gamp. My own appearance on this planet was not a great many years after Lady Lucy went to her rest, but I never heard any one above the lowest rank say 'ooman.' My own mother often told stories in which it occurred in quotations of sayings she had heard. I remember hearing Sir Algernon West say that his own parents always said 'Room, goold, chaney, laylock,' for 'Rome, gold, china, lilac.' These words have all been corrected by the spelling from

ON THE VULGAR TONGUE

the normal traditional English pronunciation. 'Chaney' may perhaps linger among the old ladies in such places as the almshouse at East Grinstead, but I doubt it. As a very little child I always said 'laylock.' This particular form had outlived its companions. Grown a little older, I suspect—I don't remember, but I fear it may have been so—that I began to correct my mother by the spelling-book. It is very difficult to write on these subjects without becoming autobiographical, and I am moved to put down here that my parents and grandparents all spoke the vulgar tongue, and the best of good English it was. My mother, for instance, always said 'husban' for 'husband.' Now the insistence on the sounding of 't's' and 'd's' in all sorts of words in which for centuries they had lain happily silent is of the very essence of the board school, spelling-book English. One must admit, however, that while all the time the matter is in dispute the particular word with the consonant sounded is perfectly hideous, once the innovation is universally accepted, the discarded form becomes a vulgarity. At this moment a battle is raging

over 'often.' The word 'often,' with the 't' sounded, instead of the old leisurely, free and easy 'of'n,' brings a sense of discomfort and annoyance whenever one hears it—but once let it become the established form (as one knows so well it will), and the ear will forthwith be dissatisfied if it misses the 't.' After all one cannot get away from the atmosphere; it is completely circumambient, and one must speak perforce the language of one's time. Still 'of'n' is worth a struggle. At the present day children in board schools are punished for pronouncing it without the 't.' On the other hand, the only thing for which I remember my own particular schoolmaster with gratitude is his having given me a jacketing for using the intolerably priggish 'Wednesday' for 'Wensday.' I deserved what I got. To quote some of these silent 't' and 'd' words. 'Cris'mas' is blessedly still universal, though I have heard 'Christmas' attempted. It sets one's teeth on edge. We still say 'wissel' for 'whistle.' It will be an outrage if the fanatics of correctitude foist 'whistel' upon us as the symbol of that happy noise of boys and blackbirds. No

ON THE VULGAR TONGUE

doubt they will attempt to do so. 'Christen' again for 'crissen' I have never heard, though 'Christian' for the old English 'Chrischen' continually grates upon my ears. Our Non-conformist brethren are great offenders in this respect. It seems that no one could say with any ease 'gristel,' or even the 'gris'l' of the pronouncing dictionaries for what as children we always called 'grizz'l.' Personally I shall always keep the pronunciation of 'Wes'minster,' 'thousan',' 'almon's,' 'mos'ly,' 'beas'ly,' and the like which I heard and spoke as a child. I repeat that when the new pronunciation is universally adopted, in some mysterious way it at once appears to be more euphonious. This is particularly the case with proper names as 'Clifton,' of which the old form is 'Cliffen.' (It is often spelt so in old registers.) 'Preston' in Sussex was always locally called 'Press'n' forty years ago. Talking of place-names there is always a danger of the local pronunciation being trampled down by outsiders through sheer force of numbers. For instance, all Londoners say 'Arúndel' for the beautiful word 'Arundel,' the French 'hiron-

delle.' Unfortunately there are many more Londoners than people living in and around the little happy town. 'Rumsey' still keeps its head above water, but the difficult and very ugly 'Chichester' has quite supplanted the true native 'Chidester.'

One could gossip endlessly about all these things. I have said that the speech of my childhood was the vulgar tongue, but there are certain things which the speakers regarded as vulgarities, and rigidly eschewed. There was something apparently very arbitrary about this. In reality when once a form became generally disused, and lingered only among the lowest class, it was considered 'vulgar.' They said 'arrand,' for instance, but never 'scollard' or 'mossel.' Now all these three are equally good old English forms, samples, I doubt not, of Sir Thomas Malory's English. A fifteenth-century priest preaching in Holy Week, would say that 'Judas took the mossel and went out.' The insistence on the 'r' seems pedantic, and the resultant word is ugly. But 'arrand' evidently went out of use more slowly than 'mossel' or 'scollard.' 'Sojer' and 'door'

ON THE VULGAR TONGUE

(which last the eighteenth-century poets rhyme with 'to her') were never used, but the present day 'soldier' and 'dore.' 'After' was scrupulously pronounced, 'arter' or 'a'ter' being left severely to the untaught and unwashed, though we have the sufficient witness of the nursery rhyme to the fact that it was the true old traditional English form :—

' Jack and Jill
Went up the hill
To fetch a pail of water ;
Jack fell down
And broke his crown
And Jill came tumbling a'ter.'

'Spannel' for 'spaniel,' and 'Dan'l' (like Lady Lucy's 'Ed'ard') for 'Daniel' were always used, as they had been for centuries. 'Weskit' for 'waist-coat,' and 'forid' for the horrible 'forehead,' I am thankful to say have not even yet been displaced. 'Cub-bard,' too, still holds its own. My father, I remember, regarded 'again' for 'agen,' and 'against' for 'agenst,' with peculiar bitterness. These forms fortunately still have the protection of the dictionaries, though no doubt it is only a respite. There was a great tendency to substitute 'd' for the written

't,' as in 'Prodestant' and 'Jubiter.' Chitterlings were always spoken of as 'chidlins.' It goes without saying that 'sparagus' or 'sparagrass' was always used. Language was not rigid, but plastic, as in Italy. The atrocious 'clerk' for 'clark,' of course was never heard. This is perhaps the most frightful of the sacrifices offered to the fetish of spelling. A very charming poem by 'Tomfool' in the 'Daily Herald' was recently ruined for the sensitive ear by the employment of this form. I had thought better of 'Tomfool' than this—indeed I think very well of him. Our forefathers said not only 'clark,' 'Barkshire,' 'Darby,' 'Varsity,' but 'clargy,' 'sarvice,' 'sarmon,' 'sarvant,' and the 'varsal world.' 'Stummick' and 'Izik' were always used. 'Stummick' has become unpleasant (though many whom it would doubtless fill with disgust now talk of their 'tummies'), but I confess that when I hear an eighteenth-century old lady say, for instance, 'Don't want no strawberries nor yet no tomatoes; sims to turn acid on me stummick; far rather have a good glass o' port wine,' it warms the cockles of my heart.

ON THE VULGAR TONGUE

Again, to hear such an old lady exclaim in a mellow voice, 'Where's me pen?' is very pleasant. 'Where is my pen?' does not seem to promise so well for the cheque the speaker is going to write. This English is much more expressive than the spelling-book English. 'Sossidges' are something that hiss and splutter in the pan; 'sawsage' is a fearsome compound of which all you can be sure of is that it is something cold. To give one last recollection, 'to hate 'em like pizen' in my childhood was a very familiar phrase.

There is no space left in which to speak of the colloquial English idiom of my recollection. But I have no doubt that in my early days I heard and spoke the English not so much of the eighteenth as of the sixteenth century. Professor Wyld gives a selection of passages illustrating the transition from the language of the sixteenth century to that of the present day. Among the rest is one from Lord Bacon, in which he says 'Hasty speech confounds the memory, and oftentimes besides unseemliness drives a man either to a non-plus or to unseemly stammering.' How often have I heard my grandmother say when,

for instance, the old lady could no longer see to thread her needle, 'I'm brought to a non-plus.' I suppose one may occasionally still hear the phrase. I only know that belonging to my own time I never use it naturally and spontaneously myself, or think of using it. 'Eight of the clock, eight of the clock,' said the dying Cardinal Wolsey, and so continued divers times rehearsing 'eight of the clock.' There are old English phrases that have altogether vanished, not only the use of them, but all recollection of their origin and meaning. When Sir Thomas More's wife came to him in the Tower to urge him to forego the martyr's crown, she told him that instead of being shut up with mice and rats, he might be in his good house at Chelsea at liberty and in favour with the King, if he would do as the Bishops and all the great ones of the land had done. 'Good Mistress Alice,' he replied, 'is not this house as nigh to heaven as my own?' To this she answered after her accustomed fashion, 'Tille-Valle, Tille-Valle.' This is put in italics, like her other exclamation, '*Bone Deus!*' It was evidently a common exclamation in the sixteenth century. In Shake-

speare it also appears in italics. 'Tilly-fally' is Mrs. Quickly's version of the phrase. The glossaries give no explanation of it. What does 'Tille-Valle' mean, and when was it last used, simply and naturally, in England? It is strange that some one so said 'Tille-Valle' for the last time.

To hear people talking, freely and at their ease, gives the listener the sense of the world to which they belong. The painter and the novelist make their records for posterity. Such a picture as Samuel Butler's 'Family Prayers' brings us into the atmosphere of a wealthy and pious mid-Victorian household in a marvellous manner. Still more would this be the case if a conversation of any given time in the past could be magically evoked and heard again. Professor Wyld says that when we read old letters in the writers' individual spelling 'we seem to hear real people actually speaking.' 'To hear them actually talking'—ah!—this is just what one would like to do.

LANGUAGE MECHANICAL AND VITAL

THE Poet Laureate, Dr. Bridges, has recently suggested that the people should themselves coin names for the many new things now coming into use, instead of meekly accepting the ready-made words provided for them. We fear that the ready-made word comes with the ready-made thing. Machinery has de-humanized language. The people have long since abdicated their old function of language-making. They have lost the old vivid sense of correspondence between the name and the thing. How many, we wonder, of the innumerable army of bicycle riders suspect any connection between the word 'bike' and the thing 'two wheels.' Language is no longer pictorial and illustrative as it once was. The old language was moulded on things ; it was founded on sight,

taken from the things which people had seen with their own eyes and made with their own hands. Modern language is taken from books, founded on notions ; nothing is visualized. It is something learned as a task, and how badly ! A language has grown up, foreign to the people who use it. Words which should be native and living are dead and alien. This book language the people make grotesque and futile efforts to pronounce. The old French of Maître François Villon is an excellent example of a living popular language. His words are things. Language is the record, vital, spontaneous, of what men have seen and done and suffered, close to life.

Think, for instance, of the quick seizing of resemblances, the play of the human faculties of observation and fancy indicated by the names given to the different parts of the human body—we mean such names as the ‘bridge’ of the nose, the ‘roof’ of the mouth, the ‘drum’ of the ear. This may seem too simple and obvious a thing to be worth mentioning, but I very much question, if these parts of the human frame had to be

named for the first time at the present day, whether such names would be found for them. Names which convey no meaning whatever to the mass of the people would be manufactured to describe these things, and the school children would learn them blindly out of books. The French word 'prunelle,' for the pupil of the eye, the 'sloe' of the eye, is a good illustration of the old way of language-making. One sees the sloe-black eyes of a little méridional child, beneath a tumbling mass of curls, turned up in wondering interrogation to some kind elder, who murmurs gazing into the dark pupils, 'Ah! quels yeux—ce sont des prunelles.' The old names of things were not laboriously constructed with the aid of a lexicon, but bubbled up in this spontaneous way.

The technical names belonging to every craft and trade, as, say, the different parts of musical instruments, for instance, the 'bridge' of a fiddle, in French the 'chevalet,' the 'little horse,' belong to this vital language. All such names of common articles of use as a 'sauce-boat' or a 'clothes-horse' show this play of fancy. I myself much

prefer the old English 'incense-boat' to the modern 'thurible' or 'censer.' One word contains an image; the others are mere prosaic descriptions of a thing from its use, like the American term 'suspenders' for braces. Things at the present time are commonly named in this way, or in more pedantic but equally lifeless fashion. If the pedantic name is given, the people who daily have to use the word at once reduce it to a mutilated stump. The telephone becomes the 'phone. Who does not know the hurried postcards, 'am 'phoning, Willis'? and the like. The most barbarous names are given to implements of all kinds. Our walls are placarded with advertisements of 'Dust Destructors.' If our own humanitarian age had witnessed the invention of that instrument of discipline, the 'cat-o'-nine-tails' would doubtless have been termed a 'flagellator.' The grim irony of the one term is popular, the dull pedantry of the other is academic. When the popular mind is dulled by mechanism and a mechanical view of the world, the academicians become the language makers, with deplorable results. The same

thing is true with regard to things edible, joints of meat or the different parts of a bird. Does any one suppose that a 'saddle' of mutton would have been so called if our own contemporaries had had the naming of it? The word 'drumstick,' again, is an admirably apt and expressive term for the lower part of the leg of a fowl. At the present time the people are forgetting these felicities. The modern landlady asks, 'Shall I do up them there legs for breakfast?'

A very beautiful example of the old style of name-giving is suggested by an object which lies before me on my table as I write. This is an orange stuck all over with cloves as thickly as St. Sebastian with arrows or 'an urchin with pricks.' This, by the way, was much esteemed by our forefathers of Tudor and Stuart days, both for its delightful fragrance, and as a sovereign preservative against all manner of diseases. A 'clove' of course is just simply a 'nail.' All over the orange the spikes are driven in up to the head. The two parts of a 'clove' or a 'nail' are the head and the spike. This is the meaning of *clavis*, *clou*, *chiodo*, *clavo*—a sharp

piece of iron with a head and a point. The fragrant nail of spice is the entire unopened blossom of the clove-tree. Of what divine flower is the clove the bud? I confess my ignorance, but I imagine it is a kind of pink. This resemblance seems to have struck all peoples. The Russian name for a 'clove' is 'gvozd,' just a 'nail,' while the word for a pink is 'gvozdika,' the 'little nail.' I suspect that this may also be the meaning of the German 'Nelke.' The Castilian name for the delightful flower is 'clavel.' One gets a positive sense of fragrance from all these words. From these fragrant cloves the mind is carried on to the 'dulces clavos' of the 'Pange Lingua.' To the men and women in a medieval street the cloves in the spicer's shop were the nails of the Cross.

The German (and indeed the French) name for a shuttle affords another delightful example of the same thing. It is called the 'little ship,' in Germany the 'Schifflein,' in France the 'navette.' Any one who has watched the process of weaving, and seen the busy little ship going to and fro on its happy journeys, must have felt the exquisite appropriate-

ness of the name. It gives an added grace to the charming sight.

To our forefathers the common articles of daily use were not dead machine-made things, but their own handiwork, loving creations of their own mind and fancy. The names they gave them were very intimate and personal. Their word-making was coloured by their own irony and humour, their own imagination and observation, their own loves and hates. The custom of giving Christian names, and these in their most homely and endearing forms, for instance, to drinking vessels, shows this. Every one has heard of a leather 'jack,' but few perhaps know that the familiar word 'jug' is a pet name equivalent to 'Joan' or perhaps to 'Judith.' This gives a new meaning to the words of the old song—

' Little brown jug, how I love thee.'

A 'toby-jug' is another of these personifications. The Huguenot potters gave the name 'Bellarmine' to the pots bearing the effigy of their arch-enemy, the great Cardinal, the author of the 'Ascensio mentis ad Deum.' The underlying idea of this may have been that of drinking from the enemy's skull,

which was one of the delights of the Norse 'Valhalla.'

The Lincolnshire word for a scarecrow is a 'malkin.' This was originally a diminutive meaning 'little Maud.' It was afterwards applied to a mop, and finally to a scarecrow, of which a mop-stick is often the backbone. It is a delightfully descriptive word. In all the old language there is this personal element. It is this which makes it so delightful, so different to the dead mechanical word manufacture of the present day.

It was the language of people who made things with their own hands, saw with their own eyes, thought with their own brains, sported with their own fantasy. It was the language of people who lived in the open air, there was in it the fragrance and the wild life of the woods. I will end with a proverb, which I heard the other day for the first time, which illustrates most delightfully that old open-air life of intercourse with nature and living things. It was a question of being disturbed by some idle rumour or empty threat. 'I have lived too long in the woods to be scared by an owl,' was the reply, drawn from some

OLD-WORLD ESSAYS

long-descended store of ripe experience and proverbial wisdom, coming down through generations of foresters and woodmen. The saying may have been just uttered by some gentle anchorite. At any rate, I think it is bad to beat.

SOME COUNTRY SAYINGS

MERCURY descends twice or at any rate once a day on our country village bringing messages from the outer world. Great is the disappointment when he altogether passes us by. This however happens seldom, and sometimes he brings pleasant surprises. This morning, for instance, he brought me a dainty and delightful little gift sent by one of those kind people who take the trouble to let a writer know when he interests them. It was a Calendar of Mottoes, one for every day of the year, 'compiled by Mother Kate of St. Saviour's Priory.' The book might be called 'a collection of country sayings,' because they were surely all made by country people. Some of these delectable rhymes and proverbs are new to me—others are year-old, almost life-long favourites. The collection contains the heart of the life of the country, the secret,

the religion of the whole old world. It reflects the way of looking at things of all the generations of simple, faithful people, from the shepherds of Bethlehem onwards—contentment, cheerfulness, observation of things around them, delight in simple pleasures, resignation which becomes joy as it embraces the Divine Will.

I cannot hope by words of mine to make the reader feel this as I feel it. The best way is to let the sayings speak for themselves. They come from all European countries. The resolute determination to make the best of things, the courageous refusal to worry, the trustful leaving of the future to God is the soul of this country wisdom. 'Say no ill of the year till it's over' is a Spanish proverb given as the motto for the eighth of January. Could one have a more admirable piece of advice? How often in years that threaten a bad harvest do things more or less right themselves before the year is done; how often in all life does 'the worst turn the best to the brave'! 'Never cross a bridge till you come to it' everybody knows. It is a picturesque putting into concrete form of the

SOME COUNTRY SAYINGS

Gospel saying, 'take no thought for the morrow, for the morrow will take thought for the things of itself,' the practice of which, if we could attain to it, would save so much unhappiness. 'Dawnte trouble Trouble till Trouble troubles you' is the quaint west country version of the same thing. The people who made such sayings as they struggled on amid all manner of obstacles, amid all sorts of disadvantages, knew nothing of the theories of Nietzsche or Schopenhauer, nothing of modern cynicism and pessimism, and would have thought the denial of the goodness of life absurd and blasphemous, as indeed it is. They gallantly ignored the dark side of things. Nothing is more striking, for instance, than the refusal of old-fashioned country people to admit that they are getting old. I was once speaking to an apple-cheeked old country parson well over eighty about the late Mr. Gladstone, and incautiously remarked, 'You see, he's getting an old man.' 'Old? old?' was the somewhat irritated reply—'he's just my age.' 'You are always as young as you feel' is a saying quoted in this book. I have heard it all my life. Plain

old farmers tell one another at the ordinary on market day how young they are, and indeed they have kept the youth of the heart. 'It's better to be seventy years young than fifty years old' is another saying quoted here.

When things were undeniably very bad, old-world people—country people and town's people in touch with the country—consoled themselves with all the proverbs of hope. 'When Israel is in the brick-pile then comes Moses' is a delightfully picturesque example. This, which I first found in Dr. Neale, is, I think, my favourite of all proverbs. The many English equivalents are known to everybody. They are heard continually from rustic lips. 'It's a long lane that has no turning,' 'The darker the night the nearer the dawn,' 'When one door shuts another opens,' you will hear continually from the country poor. A saying which is a great favourite of my own is quoted here as from 'an old play': 'Patience, cousin, and shuffle the cards.' Yes, and clear the fire and snuff the candles, and look for better things. I fancy, by the way, that I first met this in

SOME COUNTRY SAYINGS

Italian: 'Pazienza e mescolate le carte.'

The last proverb and the scene which it calls up tells something of the tedium of winter days which must so often have weighed on dwellers in the country—old people, sick people, people with little to do. Like all the other inevitable things of life, it was met gallantly and cheerfully. 'He who passes a winter day escapes an enemy' is another saying which, I believe, is Spanish. One remembers old people one has known in remote places where communication with the outside world was difficult, full of aches and pains, their own time of activity over, and one wonders at their cheerfulness, their making the most of little things, their looking forward to letters and discussion of them when they came, their interest in belated newspapers and simple games of cards. When going out is out of the question, they dwell on the joy and pleasure of being by their own fireside.

'While folk goes wandering vur and nigh,
We bides at whoam my dog and I'

is a west country rhyme. 'If you haven't got what you like you must like what you've

got' has the same lesson of contentment. It is quoted here in French, 'Quand on n'a pas ce qu'on aime, il faut aimer ce qu'on a.' The true country people, however, always thought their own things better. 'One pilgrimage to St. David's is worth three to Rome' was a medieval proverb.

Good humour and sound sense again and again strike one as characteristic of these sayings made by people thrown upon themselves, far from the great world and its happenings, and yet finding in their own little world all that is indeed to be found anywhere. What can be wiser and truer than this, 'Folks is quare to drive'? It must have been first uttered surely with the reflective smile of Tennyson's 'Miller'—that 'slow, wise smile' that was 'half within and half without and full of dealings with the world.' 'It's canny to say nowt' is a piece of north country wisdom, inculcating the desirability of not meddling with slander and quarrelling and loud-mouthed disputes of any kind. How wise, too, is the continual insistence on not expecting too much! 'Every path hath a puddle' is quoted from George Herbert,

SOME COUNTRY SAYINGS

The poet-priest, by the way, is a perfect store-house of proverbial lore, and many sayings looked upon as his are no doubt old English proverbs heard year out, year in, from the lips of the Bemerton people. When he says, for instance, 'February makes a bridge and March breaks it' he is evidently quoting a bit of old English weather lore. 'The river past and God forgotten' is another of his sayings. A variant of this which I have sometimes heard is 'when they're ill they pray to God and send for the doctor, as soon as they're well they forget God and don't pay the doctor.'

One need not mention the old-world interest and delight in the changes of the year, and all its sights and sounds, the coming and going of the birds, the times of the flowers, the lore of the months, the weather-wise proverbs of sowing and reaping. Some in this book are quite new to me and extremely delightful. Here are two charming Italian ones about violets. The motto for January 20 is—

'Ecco San Sebastiano
Violette in mano.'

In the quick-coming Roman spring, the boyish martyr, beautiful as Apollo, smiling amid all his pain, comes scattering handfuls of violets. Again, a lovely fancy is given as an 'Italian proverb' on May 5. 'There are no violets after the Ascension because the Lord has taken them all to heaven.' Many of the sayings given in English appear to come from kindlier climes, even making allowance for the eleven days' difference in the Old and New Style Calendars. 'On St. Joseph's day the swallows fly over the roof' must surely come from Provence or at any rate Central France. The Old Style Calendar would only bring this to the end of March, even if St. Joseph was ever much regarded in Old England. It is still the time of the daffodils that come before the swallow dares. On the other hand, 'On Our Lady's birthday the swallows fly away' may perhaps be Old English. The Old Style Calendar would bring this date to September 19. Thinking of the bad harvest and disasters of the present year (1912), it is not without interest to recall the Old English rhyme—

'When Our Lord falls in Our Lady's lap,
Then let England look for mishap.'

SOME COUNTRY SAYINGS

Easter Eve, 1912, fell on the Old Style Lady Day. Personally, I do not disbelieve in the proverbial expressions of the result of our forefathers' observations. I heard this proverb quoted, by the way, as 'When Easter falls in a lady's lap,' just as you will hear the shrine of Our Lady at Walsingham spoken of as 'Lady Walsingham's shrine.' The Old French rhyme about the Saints' Days and the end of the world—

' Quand Georges Dieu crucifera,
Quand Marc Dieu resuscitera,
Quand Jean Dieu portera,
Le fin du monde arrivera '

must, however, be looked upon as an exercise of the spirit of prophecy. Talking of prophecies, it is perhaps unkind to quote the following, which is not without application to the present day :—

' When Londoners burrow underground,
Then sin and wickedness will abound.'

I remember, by the way, meeting one day in the train a very conservative old country-woman, a kind of Old Believer, who complained bitterly of the introduction of the

New Style. 'We ought not to change what Christ has fixed,' she said. Here are two March sayings I have never heard before. The first refers to the storms with which March comes in: 'March borrowed a cloak from his father and pawned it after three days.' The next is even more charming: 'March comes in with an adder's head and goes out with a peacock's tail.' This seems too poetical to be English. It is like a lovely little illumination from a fourteenth-century missal. The proverb for the third of March is given as—

' First David then Chad,
Then Wulstan roaring mad.'

In the Fens our version is, 'Then Winnal roaring mad.' No one knows who Winnal was, but there is a 'Winnal Fair' at Peterboro' on March 3. There is always the same play of fancy on familiar things. 'Le vieux Noël plume ses oies' is the French variant of our saying about the old woman plucking her geese. One sees the eye of the children grow larger as they listen to the old nurse and watch the falling and dancing of the wonderful goose feathers. Some of the rhymes seem

SOME COUNTRY SAYINGS

the whimsical inventions of nurses for the pleasure of their charges, as, for instance :—

‘ Whoever keeps a black cat
Will prosper and grow fat,’

and again :—

“If all the cats in the house are black,
Lasses of lovers will have no lack.”

How pleasant again are such rhymes as—

‘ A swarm of bees in June
Is worth a silver spoon.’

To these simple souls a silver spoon was a symbol of great riches. The Reformation is held by many to have driven the fairies away from England, but it does not seem to have altogether exorcized the spirit of folk-lore, as is witnessed by a rhyme I have sometimes heard quoted which evidently dates from Post-Reformation times, and which struck me as very interesting and curious :—

‘ When Daniel’s in the lion’s den,
Then the woodcock comes again.’

That is of course some time in October. This is the only instance I remember of some natural happening being connected not with the Saint’s Day or the Gospel narrative, but

OLD-WORLD ESSAYS

with the Lessons from the English Bible read at Morning or Evening Prayer.

In one or two cases 'Mother Kate' has not chosen her mottoes happily. The verse for St. Valentine's Day should surely have been the sweet old rhyme that breathes the very fragrance of country courtship :—

' The rose is red,
The violet's blue,
Carnation's sweet,
And so are you.'

Instead of that she gives a high-flown American sentiment about 'widening circles.'

The people who made all these old sayings lived happy lives amid natural sights and sounds and living creatures. These things are all reflected in their proverbs and rhymes. They thought in concrete images. They did not know the meaning of the word 'ethical,' without which some modern writers seem unable to get through a sentence, but their lives were lives of contentment. They kept through dark days and bright cheerfulness that 'fair weather of the heart.' They were thankful for good fortune when it came, but they knew that—

SOME COUNTRY SAYINGS

‘ Ciel très étoilée
N’est pas de longue durée.’

They had or at least strove for that ‘ Patience ’ which is the first and last word of all proverbs. ‘ Though God take the sun out of the heaven we must have patience,’ George Herbert says, and again a French proverb has it, ‘ Patience aujourd’hui, mon ami, demain sera ce que Dieu voudra.’ They believed that ‘ His Will is our Peace.’ So they ‘ said Alleluia in time of adversity ’ with the Spanish mystic, and held with the old English poet that ‘ there was never payne but it had joye at last.’

THE SENSE AND NONSENSE OF RHYME

POETRY has always seemed to me a kind of super-common-sense. It may be defined, I think, as the quintessence of common sense, the flower of common sense. The poets, commonly looked upon as mere dreamers, idle visionaries, are the really practical people. The claim is made for the mystics that in everyday matters they are the most practical and sensible and wideawake of mortals. St. Teresa is a classical example. This is not quite the sort of claim I am here making for poets. I suppose one must concede that Villon, Marlowe, Shelley, Coleridge, Swinburne and the rest did not shine in the management of affairs, though I think it may very fairly be argued that their misfortunes largely arose from the collision of their directness and simplicity with a foolish environment. A poet is like a child—in fact

THE SENSE AND NONSENSE OF RHYME

he always remains a child. He wants to talk straight, to go to the point, to put things down in black and white. All good poetry has the note of directness, of simplicity. The prosaic world, the wise world, to be more exact, the worldly-wise world delights in circumlocutions and ambages, it wants to wrap things up in all sorts of ways, to blunt the truth, to see things in a blurred and misty mirror. Prosaic people, the great mass of people, at any rate in our own day, see a little bit of a thing, and they generally refuse to see it in any connection. This is what is called being practical. To see further, to look to the future, to have one's eyes on the distance, is to be a dreamer, a stargazer. 'The eyes of a fool are in the ends of the earth' is a typical maxim of worldly-wise wisdom. I think the poets are always seeing possibilities. They divine them. They have in most cases no idea as to how their visions are to become facts, but they see clearly that such things are within the grasp and reach of the human mind. Let me give an example. Fifty years ago what would have been the answer given by the practical man, the man of affairs, the

man of common sense, to any one who ventured to talk about flying machines? The idea would have appeared on a level with the fantasies of the *Arabian Nights*. Any one who even talked of it would have seemed altogether to have left the terra firma of truth and reality. 'I should as soon think of flying' was a proverb. But the poet brushes aside the objections of common sense. In illustration of this let me quote some stanzas of Tennyson's *Locksley Hall*. But before doing so, let me ask another question. If at the present time any one speaks of a Federation of Europe, a commonwealth of Europe, a United States of Europe, let alone of the world, what is very likely to be the answer given by the practical person, the person, that is, who sees just before his nose, who cannot conceive of things being different from what they are, who dislikes any kind of mental effort? He will probably say 'Nonsense—this is merely a dream of faddists and cranks.' Now as an illustration of the nonsense and sense of poetry, that nonsense which is a super-common-sense, common sense at its largest, and most ample and

THE SENSE AND NONSENSE OF RHYME

spacious and dignified, let us take these lines of the dreamer, Tennyson :—

‘ For I dipt into the future, far as human eye could see,
Saw the Vision of the World, and all the wonder that
should be.

‘ Saw the heavens filled with commerce, argosies of
magic sails,
Pilots of the purple twilight, dropping down with costly
bales.

‘ Heard the heavens fill with shouting, and there rained
a ghastly dew,
Saw the nations’ airy navies grappling in the central
blue ;

‘ Far along the world-wide whisper of the south wind
rushing warm,
With the standards of the peoples rushing thro’ the
thunderstorm ;

‘ Till the war-drum throbbed no longer and the battle-
flags were furled
In the Parliament of Man, the Federation of the
World.’

Now I suppose that when these lines were written, they would have been looked upon by all sensible, practical people, whether they enjoyed them as poetry or not, as something quite outside practical politics. But what is the plain matter of fact ? The poet needn’t have dipped into the future far as human eye could see, he need only have looked some

OLD-WORLD ESSAYS

sixty years or so ahead to find his dream of the airy navies a reality. And what of the second part of the prophecy, the Federation of the World, the reign of a universal law based on common sense? The practical people still shake their heads, and say 'Utopia.' But why shouldn't the dream of Utopia be realized? We have realized with complete success the dream of the Inferno.

'I'non so ben ridir com' io v'entrai
Tant'ero pien di souno in su quel punto
Che la verace via abandonai.'

We have realized the nightmare of the Middle Ages ; we full of sleep have left the direct and righteous way and have come into the city where all hope must be abandoned unless we can find a way out of it. There is no hope while we remain in it. In the war the nightmare of Dante became a living reality on the stage of the world. It was realized in its minutest details, down to the tanks. Dante had probably no more idea how to construct a tank than Tennyson had how to make a flying-machine, but the poet is the seer, the diviner, he sees everything,

THE SENSE AND NONSENSE OF RHYME

divines everything. Now I would ask the good practical people this question. If we have realized the nightmare, the evil dream, the inferno, why should we not realize the sweet and pleasant and happy dream of the Utopia? 'The common sense of most' can do it, that common sense of people which they mistrust and undervalue, and which it needs the poet with his nonsense, his dreams and fables and fairy-tales to make them believe in and act on. They are led by conventions and pomposities and platitudes and humbug of all kinds. It needs the poet's childishness, the poet's directness, the poet's foolishness, which is really the Divine Reason to make the scales fall from their eyes.

'When I was young and had no sense
I bought a fiddle for eighteenpence.'

The nonsense of poetry is the foolishness of youth; the sense of prose is the wisdom of old age.

Well, just as poetry is the flower of common sense, so the fragrance of the flower is rhyme. It delights me that the great poem of the Middle Ages, the *Divina Commedia*, is in

rhyme. Unlike Virgil, unlike Milton, Dante, the seer of the Middle Ages, found it worthier and more satisfying, as well as sweeter and more natural, to tell the story of his tremendous journey in rhyme. Rhyme seems an especial glory of the Christian Middle Ages. There is the great poem, and there are, as it were all around it, the ballads, the carols, the hymns, the folk-songs, tinkling with delightful sound.

‘Veni, Sancte Spiritus
Et emitte cœlibus
Lucae Tuæ radium.’

That is the kind of lilt to which the thirteenth century moved.

I know that rhyme was an invention—‘that most glorious invention of rhyme,’ Dr. Neale calls it—and can be assigned to a definite date, but to me rhyme always seems the natural thing, the direct, spontaneous thing, and blank verse the artificial thing. ‘Blank verse’ would seem to be an ‘art,’ a luxury of the few, ‘rhyme’ a natural aptitude of the many. It was probably too common, too vulgar, too popular a thing for the pedants of the Renaissance. They

THE SENSE AND NONSENSE OF RHYME

no doubt despised the jingling and tinkling of Christian folk-songs. I am not sure that a perfectly natural and unsophisticated people would not talk in rhyme. At any rate, I am perfectly certain that they would not speak in blank verse. The mind cannot dwell on a word for a moment without being at once carried on to another word of a similar sound. Thus it would be quite natural to say:—

‘Light the supper-table tapers,
Oil and vinegar and capers.’

But that any one should have talked like this:—

‘Kindle the lights on our domestic board,
Bring forth each condiment appropriate,’

is beyond the bounds of possibility.

There is thus a directness, a simplicity, a truth about rhyme that is quite wanting in blank verse. Many modern ‘poets’ fill me with wonder and amazement. One great mark of the vanity of these pretentious people is their dispensing with rhyme. Here is a little ‘poem’—save the mark—by Mr. Ezra Pound. It is entitled ‘Spring’ and

OLD-WORLD ESSAYS

consists only of three lines. Of the three lines one consists of two words—the other two of one word each.

‘ Spring . . .
Too long . . .
Gongula. . . .’

By an extreme stretch of sympathetic imagination, I think one can just make out something of what is intended to be conveyed. But what would any folk-song-making persons think of it? Mr. Pound says that he offers the book, of which this poem is a specimen, as a burnt-offering for the sins of the nation. This is an example of the nonsense of blank verse, a nonsense which is not the covering and protective sheath of the most precious sense but nonsense indeed. In contrast to this, let me quote a poem made quite spontaneously in my hearing by a little girl on the same subject. On a fine February morning she broke out suddenly :—

‘ The birds sing,
They think it’s Spring.’

Here is truth, fact, reason, the essence of poetry.

Rhyme, it seems to me, is the mother-

THE SENSE AND NONSENSE OF RHYME

tongue of the concrete, the actual. It is the proper language in which to talk of tangible, visible things. Blank verse is the medium for abstract speculation, for reasoning about free-will, fate, foreknowledge absolute, and the like. Jargon will do for the subtleties of lawyers, journalese is good enough for the purposes of politicians ; but if you want to talk of boots and shoes and sealing-wax, of cabbages and kings, there is nothing like rhyme. How full the old ballads and folk-songs are of all manner of beautiful objects, drinking vessels, clothes, ships, hawks, hounds, trees, and flowers ? Take any verse of any old English poet who was above all a rhymers. Here is one from Herrick :—

‘ Down with the rosemary and bay,
Let box now domineer
Until the dancing Easter Day
On Easter Eve appear.’

The verse is full of sweet-smelling greenery. It is moreover a delightful example of the sense and nonsense of rhyme. ‘ What nonsense ! ’ the practical person will say. ‘ How can Easter Day appear on Easter Eve ? ’ Well, the poet is quite right—the Easter

feast begins at the midday of Easter Eve—but I don't suppose he thought of that; he was probably carried on by the delightful flood of the nonsense of rhyme. I remember, by the way, it being remarked to me that the hymn 'Brief life is here our portion,' which had been sung at a funeral, was very unsuitable. The person buried, it was pointed out, was elderly; 'she must have been getting on to fifty.' This is the limitation of the severely practical mind. The dreamer, lost in his reverie, muses aloud: 'For a thousand years in Thy sight are but as yesterday, seeing that is past as a watch in the night.'

Poetry, as I have said, deals with the concrete. To see how false is the common idea of the poet as a being with his head in the air walking about in blind oblivion of what is passing before his eyes, we have only to turn to Dante. Probably no one ever lived of such quick, alert, interested vision no one who so delighted in the spectacle of common everyday things. The similes of Dante are a great host, an innumerable multitude. I have sometimes thought of

THE SENSE AND NONSENSE OF RHYME

making a collection of them. Such a collection would give a complete image of the world of Dante's day, the world as he saw it. Nothing escapes him, he passes nothing by. He thinks in these concrete images, he lives in them ; he observes everything, he despises nothing ; life and reality are intensely real and living to him. Here is nothing abstract, nothing academic, nothing artificial. This is the true spirit of rhyme. These similes are themselves rhymes, correspondences ; they occur to him as rhymes do. There is a French phrase : ' What does that rhyme to ? ' To Dante everything in the spiritual world rhymes to some homely sight on earth, the cook in the kitchen or the old tailor peering through his needle's eye. All this means leisure of mind, play of mind. He is not too much occupied with heaven to be able to delight in the colours of a mackerel's back, and yet amid these earthly things he arrives at more knowledge of heaven than the most detached theologians.

Rhyme is play of mind, but the strange thing is that this play spontaneously, unconsciously conforms to law. It is prose that

is anarchic, lawless, muddled. There is the sense of a return in the rhyme at the end of a verse, of coming home, of being at the haven where you would be. In blank verse you come back some miles away from the desired spot, and in prose you do not come back at all.

The state of mind which expresses itself in rhyme is eminently one of sanity. Nursery rhymes are in the technical sense nonsense, but there is in them the rhythm and sanity of life itself. More than this, the state of mind which they reflect is one of a large unselfishness. Poets are no doubt often querulous, difficult to live with, and the rest, they have their full share of our common human weaknesses, but no real poet was ever wrapped up in himself, was ever without that large unselfish interest in the spectacle of the world which is the fountain from which poetry springs. Poetry might almost be defined as an involuntary exclamation of joy and wonder breaking from the poet at this spectacle of things. This is especially true of the rhyming poetry. Dante is perhaps hardly the typical rhymers. By rhyming

THE SENSE AND NONSENSE OF RHYME

poetry I mean such things as ballads, carols, folk-songs, medieval sequences and nursery rhymes. In all these things the maker is concerned with the thing said rather than with the manner of saying it. He is filled with the story he has to tell, not thinking about the way to tell it. The effects of the old ballads are not consciously sought after, they are just there like effects of sea and sky. The makers did not think about their 'art'; they just wanted to give the thing itself, in its simplicity, in its essence. They are thinking all the time about their theme, not about themselves. Concentration on oneself is the root of insanity, going out of oneself is the way of sanity and life. The makers of nursery rhymes were not thinking about themselves, they were simply filled with delight in birds and animals, the whole world of nature, the play and rhythm of life. The nonsense in which they bubbled over about the little dog laughing and the cow jumping over the moon, sprang from the heart of sanity and common sense. Many modern poets make me very unhappy. They are so evidently only posing. They are not

thinking of the thing they are talking about, but of the way in which they are talking about it. What they want to show you is how clever they are. They are insincere, and the greater their insincerity the greater their obscurity and pretentiousness. Personally, I find pretentious poetry and poetry bearing the marks of conscious effort very depressing. True poetry has a visionary quality; it is not a manufacture but an apparition.

A poem is not something the maker spins out of himself, but something external which in his verse he renders as faithfully as possible. When Tennyson wrote 'a million emeralds break from the ruby-budded lime' he didn't make it at all. The lime-tree made it—he just saw it. He had unselfishness enough and leisure of heart enough to see it. This sincere unselfish vision one finds above all in the old ballad-makers. Many of the best hymns are in reality ballads. For instance, 'While shepherds watched their flocks by night' is a perfect example of a ballad. There is no attempt at ornament. The story is told by some one who delights in it, and

THE SENSE AND NONSENSE OF RHYME

whose mind is filled with it. Again, the Easter hymn 'O filii et filice' is a true ballad. I remember, by the way, some one quoting the verse—

'No longer Thomas then denied,
He saw the Feet, the Hands, the Side,
"Thou art my Lord and God," he cried,
Alleluia,'

which had been sung at the Temple Church and saying that it was sad to think of an educated congregation being asked to sing words so crude. This is a good illustration of the working of the so-called 'practical' and 'sensible' mind, that is the prosaic mind. It accepts something as a fact, indeed makes a special effort to commemorate and rejoice in it, yet it prefers all sorts of talking round about it and wrapping it up to the clear and straightforward and joyful statement of it. If the ballad is crude it is with the crudity of Carpaccio.

Rhyme then is the crowning grace of poetry, and poetry however fantastic in form is the soul of sanity and truth. The more magical poetry is the nearer it is to reality and fact. The discarding of rhyme

is a step in the direction of the self-conscious and the artificial. There could never be a folk-poetry in blank verse. Some so-called poets of late have discarded not only rhyme but rhythm itself. I admit that a certain inevitability is possible in *vers libre*, but how very rarely it is attained! You cannot have the inward and spiritual grace of poetry without the outward and audible sign of rhythm, and it is much more seemly and comforting, to say the least, to have the beautiful ceremony of rhyme as well. Like the ceremonies of the Church, rhyme is something natural, instinctive, spontaneous. Let me here set down the names of two rhymers of the present day who are able to give the most intense pleasure to those who are happy enough to care for such things. One is the Belgian poet, Emile Cammaerts. His noëls and cards are beautiful beyond words. In a fantastic little Easter poem, for instance, in which Mary Magdalene talks with the birds in the garden, he gives the very truth and reality of the scene—the indifference and the calm of nature amid the most tremendous happenings.

THE SENSE AND NONSENSE OF RHYME

The other living writer I should like to mention is Mr. Walter de la Mare. The reason his poems are so magical is, I think, that they are so simple and true to the plain fact. The 'practical' man thinks he sees the plain fact and doesn't. He sees so little in it that he ekes it out in all sorts of verbose and pompous ways. But Mr. de la Mare writes delightfully about such simple things as 'Bread and Cherries.'

'Cherries, ripe cherries,
The old woman cried,
In her snowy white apron
And basket beside,
And the little boys came,
Eyes shining, cheeks red,
To buy bags of cherries
To eat with their bread.'

It seems so simple that you say 'Anybody could have written that.' Doubtless they could if they had really seen the scene of the old woman selling cherries on the hot June day, but very few people do really see such scenes, and of those who do very few think them important enough to set down.

Let me end as I began. The poets, the dreamers, the makers of nonsense rhymes,

OLD-WORLD ESSAYS

the tellers of fantastic stories of travel and adventure, see things more clearly and are in closer touch with reality than the materialist despisers of dreams, and their wildest imaginations, their most improbable prophecies, are apt to become plain practical realities. The poets do not short-sightedly and hastily limit possibility, and neither should we.

ON GETTING BACK INTO THE PAST

WILBERFORCE, after reading a novel of Sir Walter Scott's, remarked that it reminded him of a giant cracking nuts. Well, perhaps the cracking of that particular kind of nuts was what that particular kind of giant was best fitted for. We suspect that Sir Walter would find himself more intimately at home in writing *Rob Roy* or *The Antiquary* than in the prosecution of more aggressively philanthropic or evangelistic activities. But the simile occurred to us recently in reading Mr. Henry James's book, *The Sense of the Past*, or, to be more exact, in reading the author's 'Notes' for the book. With regard to the book itself, a friend in Surrey will forgive us if we borrow one of her good stories. An old village gaffer and his two daughters had heard that

a London company were appearing at Guildford in a play called 'Ghosts.' They promised themselves the time of their lives in going to see it. It was gently hinted that they might find the play dull, and the suggestion was made that a visit to the cinema might prove more entertaining. However, their resolution of seeing the London company in the play with the attractive title remained unshaken. What was good enough for London was good enough for them. 'Oh! ma'am,' reported one of the daughters afterwards, 'it *was* dull, and Father, he kept on saying, "Whatever be it all about?"' 'But there was a clergyman in it,' said the other daughter, unwilling after all to admit the complete failure of the expedition, 'he *was* a good man.' In reading the text of Mr. James's book, we found ourselves very much in the situation of the old rustic at Ibsen's play, without even the compensation afforded by the clergyman in that masterpiece. The query that arose in our mind was, 'Whatever be it all about?' We have sometimes been assailed by the thought of literary treasures being lost by the editors or publishers to

ON GETTING BACK INTO THE PAST

whom they had been sent not having patience to 'get into' them, by their inability to read on. We ourselves did not 'get into' Mr. James's book until we turned to the 'Notes.' We were at once sensible of the passage from unrealities to something intensely living and real. Here was a quite enormous mental power being used in a particular way, a way altogether pleasurable to its possessor. There is a genuine human interest in seeing such a faculty exercised, in what is, *pace* Mr. Wilberforce, the only way possible, with a candid and childlike delight. What one may call the blameless vanity of Mr. James, his sense of the importance of his genius, is very engaging. Here is the giant cracking nuts. Mr. James sits with his pair of silver casse-noisettes, his pair of magic silver casse-noisettes, and his little pile of walnuts before him, and talks in such a fascinating way about how prettily he is going to crack them that we go back with a fresh interest to the book itself. Moreover, with the aid of the notes, it is possible to understand the story. It is very satisfactory to know that when the door of the house in Mansfield Square

closes behind Ralph, it definitely shuts him up in the year 1820. He really gets back into the Past.

We confess that the possibility of getting back into the Past has long been a favourite dream and speculation of our own. It must be acknowledged, however, that what we have contemplated is only, so to speak, a spectacular assistance at events and scenes of bygone time. Mr. James's young man gets back into 1820 as an actor in the drama of those days. Hence arises what Mr. James so repeatedly calls the *malaise*. Perhaps one should rather say that the necessity of action in the Past greatly aggravates the *malaise* which even a spectator must feel. The sensation given by finding oneself wrapped round by the atmosphere of an unfamiliar alien time, in contact only with people whose mental processes were all if ever so little different must be a kind of counterpart of *mal de mer*, perhaps *mal d'air*. To say that a man of the twentieth century put back even to so recent a date as 1820 would feel a fish out of water is perhaps no more than adequate. The strangeness would be the

ON GETTING BACK INTO THE PAST

trouble, not any mere lack of convenience or amenity in the surroundings. One supposes that any earth-born mortal who by some chance had strayed into the most amiable of other planets would find a certain relief in feeling his feet sink once more into the soft mud of Central Africa—a crocodile, cannibal country, but still Mother Earth. Africa, moreover, is in communication with Europe. This brings us to another consideration, which perhaps in our meditations on these subjects we had not sufficiently envisaged, that is, that having once got back into the Past one might have to stay there, or at any rate, like Mr. James's hero, find considerable difficulty in effecting one's escape to the Present.

But this probably would be an effect of becoming involved in action in the Past. We are inclined to think that certain persons have on occasion got back into the Past, but only as spectators, as temporary visitors. There was the case of the two ladies in Paris, published a few years ago, who got back into 1789. Who shall arbitrarily say that such things are impossible? Again, consider the

whole class of religious visionaries, of whom Sister Catherine Emmerich is a very striking example. She was, by the way, one of the name-saints of the great Lord Acton. This peasant girl, who had never read 'either the Bible or the Testament,' and knew no word of any language but Platt-Deutsch, assisted every year as an eye-witness at the scenes of the Passion. We think that any unprejudiced reader of the book which she dictated, and in which her visions are described in the minutest detail, must be struck by a certain quality of verisimilitude. The irresolute Pilate, for instance, consults his fowls for an omen, watching the way they eat. Seers are by no means uncommon in Celtic countries, such as, to quote a living instance, Zacharie le Rouzik at Carnac. 'Sometimes,' he says, 'on a sunny morning, as I stand looking down the long aisles of Carnac, I can see the tribes coming, the wild skin-clad men, dancing, singing, driving their victims towards the cromlechs, where I was watching with the priests. I can see them! I can see them!' This is not meant to be merely rhetorical, but a statement of fact. Some of

ON GETTING BACK INTO THE PAST

M. le Rouzik's accounts of his visions are most circumstantial.

These things are no doubt the result of an intense concentration of the mind upon the events and persons of some particular epoch of the Past, the 'living in it,' as we say; in the case of visionaries like Sister Catherine Emmerich the absorption of the whole personality in the contemplation of the Sacred Story, in such cases as that of M. le Rouzik the entire dedication of the mind to the discovery and reconstruction of the prehistoric Celtic world. Of this last an admirer writes: 'His eyes are strange black eyes that seem to find it difficult to focus themselves on anything nearer than the Neolithic Age in which he is always living.'

The 'getting back into the Past,' which we ourselves have sometimes adumbrated, is something on a much more modest scale than these rewards of an intense concentration. It is to be noted, however, that even these contemplatives, these creative dreamers or diviners, so to speak, only get back to their chosen epoch in the state of

spectators, never of actors. To act in the Past, so making it something different, other than it was, belongs only to romances. The actor in the Past has a difficult part to sustain, as Mr. James's hero discovered. But thinking of it not as a scene in which one acts, but merely as a Vision, some fugitive yet convincing glimpse does not seem to us impossible of attainment. It must not, of course, be consciously worked up to, it must come unobserved, a shy involuntary thing, like poetry or the Kingdom of God. It must descend on one as the late eighteenth century descended on the ladies at Versailles. It must be no manufacture, but an apparition. But poetry, even of the most visionary quality, has also its unnoted preparation in circumstance, things that predispose for its appearance. Suppose, for instance, one had spent a quite solitary Christmas—say, at Canterbury, and all alone had heard lovely carols, and thought much of the days of Dickens and Marlowe and Chaucer, and of a still older Past. Christmas Day had gone by, and Stephen and John, and the Innocents, and one had come to the

ON GETTING BACK INTO THE PAST

day of the Great Martyr. One had thought more than ever with the old veneration of the great Prelate who had said that there was something higher and more sacred than the State, something that the State must not touch. Sitting perhaps in a tea-shop, one would have a sense of a certain loosening of the rigidity of things, of the power of distance in time or place. One would seem to have in one's ears the breaking of the waves of Deal. They must have broken so in 1170. Lulled by the waves of Deal one would fall more and more into a kind of trance, until one walked out into unaccustomed streets, and heard all around one the sound of Norman-French. One would know at once that one was listening to words spoken more than seven hundred years ago. Or suppose one woke in the deep middle of a dark winter night and found oneself in a coach stopping at the door of a posada in the heart of seventeenth-century Spain, and saw by the lantern-light the passengers alighting, the host in the doorway, the servants running out, not dim and spectral, but living, breathing, and heard

the voices, the exclamations. 'Jesus, qué frio,' they would say.

It is not, we think, more wonderful that people should sometimes get from the Present back into the Past, than that in any particular Past, that Past of all Past, there should have been people, just those particular people, just then and there, to whom that Past was the Present. It is difficult to convey this sense of wonderment; words are a very recalcitrant medium. The expression of it wants to be quite clear from any verbal fog; it wants to stand out all bright and glittering in the smokeless air. Why should those particular people have been there just then? One might have been there oneself. They are bringing in the boar's head, say, into the hall of St. John's College, Oxford, on the Christmas Day of 1555. It is the year of the burning of the bishops, the great year of the burning of all heretics. It is a bad time for heretics, but the world is as good as it ever was. We look back from our distance in time and call that age dark and irrational, we, who can do so little to dispel the darkness and unreason of our own.

ON GETTING BACK INTO THE PAST

But as we stand in the banquet hall that sixteenth-century Christmas Day, we feel that the sense of festivity and rejoicing is dimmed by no dark thoughts. The air is fragrant with Christmas greenery ; the holly bushes are afire. The silver sconces and candlesticks and flagons shine their brightest. There is a feeling of the permanence of all good old English customs, the restoration and strengthening of all good old Christian ways. One is a spectator of the scene, but one might have been an actor in it. One might have been the servitor with sleeked-back hair and stiff frill, holding the great dish solemnly aloft. 'Caput apri defero.'

THE SENSE OF THE PAST

The Road and the Inn. By James John Hissey. (Macmillan. 10s. net.)

WHAT is called 'the sense of the Past' is perhaps at bottom the sense of the Permanent. It is also the sense of the Future. It is the sense of an abiding order of things which the human generations traverse in their turn. It is the sense of our transitoriness in contrast with the permanence of the world's life. The fascination of what are called 'antiquities' lies in the sense of an effect produced by the transient upon the abiding; if you will, upon the Eternal. These things are *graffiti*, scribbles left by those who have passed before us upon the great lasting walls of the architecture that remains. This poignant sense of our own transience gives its charm to the past. In some town, say of south-west France, a butterfly floats through

THE SENSE OF THE PAST

the Rue de l'Amiral and sails out over the broad Atlantic, leaving behind no trace or memory of its passage. Man, apparently as fleeting, perpetuates his moment, leaves his signature upon the great framework of things through which he passes.

Men have always thought of themselves as travellers, of human life as a journey. The technical name given by medieval theologians to our mortal life was the 'Via.' The great structure of things through which men pass remains largely unaffected by their transit. The traveller—say, St. Francis Xavier traversing his native country of Navarre, on his way from Rome to the Indies—rests on a summer evening on a stone bridge over a clear stream and watches the boys of a Basque sixteenth-century hamlet catching crayfish in the river. The roads stretch away in all directions, his own road lies before him, fateful and mysterious. The great movements are astir which are to influence the world so profoundly and yet leave it so unchanged ; but there is that one moment of the life of the world in itself complete and self-contained. Or think of

the day of his arrival, a dozen years before, as a student at the medieval University of Paris. The passers in the streets draw their cloaks close around them, the light fades from the leaden sky, the wind blows in cold gusts, the sere leaves rustle down—here is the scene of the great lasting stage, the play always going on in which he has come to take a momentary part.

The charm of the road is that so many wayfarers have traversed it before us and left traces of their passage, and that though they are gone yet the roads remain. The roads traversed by Mr. Hissey in his new book are homely and familiar ones. His journey, performed in a motor-car, takes him from Sussex to Fenland and back again. He writes very unpretentiously—an unkind critic might say in a somewhat trite and banal style ; but the sense of the Past is strong upon him. He is a genuine lover of old things. He is happy with Toby jugs and warming-pans, with fans and snuff-boxes, with old clocks and beds. He loves these things because through them he is in touch with the great permanent reality—human life. His heart is in quiet

THE SENSE OF THE PAST

country towns, with their old-fashioned shops and unspoiled market places, and above all, their inns. The inn indeed has always been a chief feature of the road. There have been cynics who have said that it is at an inn that the traveller on life's journey finds his warmest welcome. There was no doubt a beautiful tradition of welcome coming down through the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, almost to our own times, but we fear few traces of it anywhere remain. The present writer confesses to sharing Mr. Hissey's love for old inns. To begin with, he loves the signs. The History of England may be deciphered from her inn-signs. The 'Nelson and Victory' tells its tale of the England of a hundred years ago; 'The Mermaid' hints at tales of the seas brought home by Elizabethan sailors; 'The Angel,' 'The Salutation,' 'The Cross Keys,' belong to Catholic England; 'The Saracen's Head' dates from the Crusades. Mr. Hissey, by the way, gives a description of the vanished sign of a White Hart Inn in Norfolk which positively makes one's mouth water. He quotes Bloomefield's *History of Norfolk* as follows:—

OLD-WORLD ESSAYS

‘The White Hart is much noted in these parts. . . . It was built in 1635 by John Peck, Esq., whose arms are over the door. The sign is very large, and beautified all over with a great number of images of large stature carved in wood.’

John Peck spent over £1,000 on the sign alone. Mr. Hissey has seen an engraving of it, and describes it as a ‘massive and elaborate structure, bridging the road.’ In the centre of the cross-beam was a hart. It was surrounded by figures of Diana with her bow and dogs, Actæon, Bacchus, Charon—‘a truly astonishing sign.’ ‘Why was it ever pulled down?’ he asks plaintively. Why, indeed?

Such a sumptuous sign must surely have indicated a delectable inn. Though for the matter of that, all inns—to call inns—are delectable. Who does not know the description of the inn in *Barnaby Rudge*? Inns seem to belong to more spacious days—the times when things like punch-bowls were in daily use, the cups and glasses that people now keep behind glass doors or cupboards, looking upon them as curiosities rather than things meant to be used. Meals in old roomy

THE SENSE OF THE PAST

inns often give one the sense of the past. It is perhaps the effect of a genial expansion. One thinks that in just such a room—in some cases that very room—on just such a day people were eating their venison pasty in the days of Richard Crookback. Or at a Somersetshire market ordinary one gets back into the seventeenth century. The farmers eating and drinking about one are all King's men. The Tories were the party of good cheer, though no doubt also there were oysters eaten and white wine drunk in the taverns of the Whigs.

Mr. Hissey finds this sense of the past especially in sleeping in rooms that some time have been occupied by great historic figures or tragic fated kings. He writes in his artless way :—

' To mention a few of the time-honoured ancient inns, there is the " Angel " at Grantham, where I slept in the very chamber where Richard III., on October 19th, 1493, signed the death-warrant of the Duke of Buckingham. At the " George " at Stamford I was allotted the very room in which Sir Walter Scott on many occasions rested on his frequent journeys from Edinburgh to London or *vice versâ*. At that fine old Jacobean hostelry at Broadway in Worcestershire I have slept in the room in which Cromwell slept on his way to his crowning

OLD-WORLD ESSAYS

victory at Worcester. . . . Then, again, at the famous Burford Bridge hotel I was given the room overlooking the charming garden, in which snug and quiet chamber Keats composed the greater part of *Endymion*. . . . At Norton St. Philips I was shown the room where the ill-fated Duke of Monmouth slept the night of June 26th, 1665. . . . Then there is "The Maid's Head" at Norwich, where Queen Elizabeth once slept. . . .'

To the present writer also there is a great fascination about such rooms as these. The bedsteads themselves in the inns and manor-houses of Old England are occasionally gorgeous pieces of furniture. At one time there was a marvellous carved and gilded bed at Tangley Manor, near Guildford. It has vanished like the sign of that Norfolk inn, but a picture of it may be seen. 'It was a very Catholic bed' the attendant told the writer. In the neighbourhood of Tangley is the grandiose manor-house of Losely, and the house at Wanborough with its more homely and tender charm. All these places are full of the past. Mr. Hissey, by the way, mentions the richly decorated Tudor manor-house of East Barsham in Norfolk, now used as a farm-house. This fairly took the writer's breath away as he came unexpectedly

THE SENSE OF THE PAST

upon it. Even more than from inns or manor-houses does the sense of the past breathe from certain churches. As one thinks, for instance, of the little Catholic chapels hidden away in the great roaring eighteenth century, how it invades and overcomes one. What an atmosphere hung about the old Sardinian Chapel ! All these things and places evoke the sense of permanence of something which one travels up to and rests in for a moment as so many generations have done before us, and so many will yet do. This sense of being in a succession, one of countless passers-by who leave behind them the thing that remains, is sometimes called up by nature alone, without any help of human architecture. One goes out some morning in October when the beech leaves are all yellow, or some magical morning of August, all mist and sunshine, a morning of hollyhocks, and one has the sense of all those who have known such mornings and are gone.

LIBER ALBUS

The Worcester Liber Albus : Glimpses of Life in a Great Benedictine Monastery in the Fourteenth Century.
By the Rev. James Wilson, D.D. (S.P.C.K. 15s. net.)

WHO in going about those 'empty cells of the human hive,' the ruined Abbeys, has not tried to people them with their inhabitants of long ago, to make a mental picture of the life they lived there, with its actual interests, the things they talked about and quarrelled over? Canon Wilson's collection of documents from the Worcester *Liber Albus*, the book of the correspondence of the Priors of Worcester, will be found very 'helpful,' as they say, to any one engaged in such an undertaking. The *Liber Albus* covers from 1301 to 1446, but the selection in this volume is taken solely from the years 1301 to 1338. This was a very good time of the world's history. John de Wyke was Prior

of Worcester from 1301 to 1317, when he was succeeded by Prior Wulstan. The book is composed of extracts from the correspondence of these two Priors. The atmosphere of the letters is very dignified and spacious. They are written mainly to great people, and in the firm handling of matters a good deal of display is made of the *gant de velours*. They express with much devotional and ceremonious language the sense of the community which probably found elsewhere a more racy and idiomatic expression.

The difficulties of community life are, of course, obvious. In the very first letter quoted we find the Prior endeavouring to prevent the return of a certain John de Dumbelton to the Convent. He had left it to become Prior of Little Malvern—the Convent had probably procured this appointment for him in order to get rid of him—and now wished to return as a simple monk to the house whence he came. (At the circumstances which had attended his resignation of Little Malvern we are left to guess.) The Prior of Worcester writes to the Archbishop of Canterbury:—

OLD-WORLD ESSAYS

‘ For quiet and the tranquil peace of our community in which we believe you take pleasure, graciously allow if it please you that John de Dumbelton, late Prior of Little Malvern, whose return we well know would disturb the quiet of our whole community, should stay at our expense at some other house of the same order, or at least that the Presidents of our general Chapter should arrange for him as they think best. We reverently fall at your fatherly feet and with heartfelt sobs we pour out our earnest prayers, and pray that in this matter you will provide for the salvation of many souls, which in the event of an adverse decision will be manifestly imperilled.

‘ May your Paternity thus feel as our Community feels, that it is better for one man to have his wish frustrated than that our whole body should perish or be dispersed.’

In spite of this pathetic pleading the Archbishop is peremptory in his demand that John de Dumbelton should be received, and a long correspondence ensues. The Prior writes most urgently :—

‘ The return of this man will hinder our holy, quiet life and disturb the minds of the brethren more than it is expedient to state. We are ready out of reverence to you to provide him with an honourable maintenance in some other house of the Order.’

He has recourse to the influence of people of importance. He writes to the President of the Order, the Abbot of Westminster,

begging him to order any arrangement, 'provided that he does not in any measure return to us.' It is finally arranged that the Convent of Worcester should give John de Dumbelton an allowance of four marks a year to assist him to study at Oxford, the Abbot of Westminster exhorting the Prior and Convent 'to conduct themselves so graciously towards John de Dumbelton that from the Supreme Giver of all good things, the Author of Peace, and Lover of Concord they may receive an eternal reward.' One pictures Brother John, a big-boned man, red-nosed, cantankerous, brawling.

On the other hand, the different religious houses greatly delighted in the possession within their walls of persons of any singular graciousness of character or nobility of mind. This is evidenced by the frequent correspondence about a monk called John de St. German. In 1302 he had been chosen by the monks as their Bishop, but he had been refused by the Pope. In 1308 the Abbot of St. Augustine's, at Canterbury, writes as follows 'to the man of religion and discreet brother and dear friend in Christ, Brother

John Germeyn, monk of the Church at Worcester ' :—

' Since our brethren one and all ardently desire your presence in order that they may be instructed by you in Holy Scripture, and since we in our convent have written to your Prior and convent to obtain your liberty to accept, devoutly in our Lord we beg your fraternity that weighing our affection for you, you would be pleased so far as in you lies, graciously to grant our request, to wit, that if as we hope you assent to our desires that you should be with us if possible soon after the Feast of St. John Baptist next.'

In 1310 the Abbot of St. Augustine's writes that John de St. German is now pursuing his studies at the University of Paris :—

' He is one of whom for nobility of conversation and character and for every mark of virtue, in all our neighbourhood widespread fame has so sounded his praise that his absence will be deplored by all who know him.'

He goes on to appeal that ' inasmuch as his own means, as we have learned, are insufficient you will regard this distinguished man with the eye of liberality and extend to him a helping hand.'

The Prior's reply, however, is cautious. As soon as he learns from John himself that he is in need, he will endeavour to do something.

When John de St. German returned from Paris to Worcester in 1315, 'the University of Masters and Teachers studying at the University of Paris' wrote to the Convent : 'We commend to you with one accord and with all possible affection this most lovable and beloved person.' Mr. Masefield, in his latest book, says of the saint in one of his ballads that 'his very touch was food.' This was the impression produced in the Middle Ages by a certain type of great humane ecclesiastic. There have been such people in the world, and they are even occasionally to be met with in our own day.

The relics of dead Saints were even more desired and sought after by the houses than the presence of living ones. In 1312 we find the Bishop of Worcester writing to the Prior that he has received a complaint from the Warden and Brethren of the Hospital of St. Wulstan that the Convent had taken from them a pastoral staff which had belonged to St. Wulstan and which they had been in the habit of using to solicit alms, and begging that if this is so the staff should be returned. The Prior in reply 'humbly signifies to his

Lordship that the insinuation of the Warden and Brethren aforesaid has no foundation in truth.' The staff they speak of has never been a day or a night out of the possession of the Convent ; it is therefore clear that what never was theirs could not have been taken from them. They are now claiming as a right what has occasionally been granted to them as a favour. St. Wulstan was that great Saint of the West Country at whose preaching the rich Bristol merchants abjured the slave-trade.

Here is an invitation to dinner which Prior John received from the Bishop in November, 1301 :—

' Godfrey, by Divine permission, Bishop of Worcester, to his beloved son in Christ, Brother John de Wyke, Prior of Worcester, salvation with the grace and blessing of God.

' On Sunday next, after St. Martin's Feast Day (Nov. 11) come to us as you love us at Alvechurch at one o'clock to dine with us on good fat and fresh venison, and an equally fat crane, which chance to have been sent us, and which we do not like to eat without you. It will be a pleasure to us both. Farewell in the Lord.'

The present writer, by the way, possesses a cookery book published at the beginning of the last century which contains a super-

lative recipe, 'To stew Lampreys as at Worcester,' which we strongly suspect originated in the Priory.

This Bishop was Godfrey Gifford, a man of no very edifying character, on whose death, in 1302, the monks had elected John de St. German. In spite of the interchange of civilities, there appears to have been no love lost between him and the Prior. In January, 1302, 'our Lord the Bishop now lying in such extreme weakness that there is no hope of his life,' the Prior writes to the Lord Chancellor that although he has received large sums of money as firstfruits he has expended nothing at all on the fabric of the Church at Worcester, for which purpose they were granted to him, and that his servants are now ceaselessly carrying off and selling his chattels and livestock, so that after his death nothing will remain.

The Bishop had, however, erected for himself a most sumptuous tomb in St. Praxed's Church, that is to say, in Worcester Cathedral, displacing for the purpose the venerated body of a Saint. After his death the Archbishop ordered its removal, and the

Prior replied that he would have done it before, but for his 'fear of the imminent death of our father, which at least in popular opinion would have been thereby hastened.'

Great thanks are due to Canon Wilson from all who care about the past for his labour of love in deciphering and translating these records. Many of them are written in Norman French. Here and there one comes across a fascinating little bit of language. The King wants, for instance, a loan of food from the convent, to be delivered by the beginning of August next—*à la Goule d'Aust prochain avenir*. Canon Wilson's note is 'Goule is gueule, the neck or gullet, and in the sense of beginning.' One supposes the image is of the neck of a bottle, the modern French 'goulot,' the narrow entrance to a capacious receptacle. The 'goule' is the first few days through which we pass before we get deep in the month. In the beginning of the fourteenth century there was no road for forty-eight leagues for those who crossed the Severn, but the bridge at Worcester, the only bridge between Bridgnorth and Gloucester, which are forty-eight leagues apart.

LIBER ALBUS

Consequently the demands on the hospitality of the Convent were very great. In these records one gets glimpses of all that vanished world of six hundred years ago, on which, with all its people, silence has fallen so long —on the travellers who crossed the bridge at Worcester, when the sunset dyed the Severn, on Bishop Godfrey and Prior John, on John de Dumbelton and John de St. German.

A CHILDHOOD IN COCKAYNE

A Childhood in Brittany Eighty Years Ago. By Anne Douglas Sedgwick. (Arnold. 10s. 6d. net.)

EVERYONE knows that poem of Browning's, 'A Toccata of Galuppi's.' It disposes, by the way, of the theory that Browning is harsh and unmusical; almost beyond any poem it is sheer music. A great poet, of course, is only harsh and unmusical if he chooses to be so, if he gets his effects that way.

'In you come with your old music, and here's all the good it brings;
What, they lived once thus at Venice where the merchants were the Kings,
Where St. Mark's is, where the Doges used to wed the sea with rings.'

'Where St. Mark's is'—what a masterly way of describing Venice! It is the privilege of a great poet to write like this—he just says things. He sketches his picture with a few

A CHILDHOOD IN COCKAYNE

careless, certain strokes, and the whole scene is before you. For the sympathetic intelligence indeed the Past may be evoked by very simple means. Nothing can be more artless than Miss Sedgwick's narration. It is 'a little sheaf of memories put together from many talks in her own tongue with an old French friend.' Yet she works the wonder as Galuppi did with his toccatas. Why should they have been there, those good-humoured ladies, in eighteenth-century Venice, and why are they gone? So too, they lived thus in Brittany eighty years ago. Why should all these people have been there just then in Brittany, the priests with their breviaries; the old ladies at their spinning wheels? The illustrations in Miss Sedgwick's book assist the working of the charm. Why, for instance, should M. le Curé, a portly figure with umbrella, snuff-box, and soutane, have been gossiping with those two white-coiffed women of Quimper in that shady, blossoming nook of the old town, on that particular morning of some particular year of the early nineteenth century?

Such inquiries are vain. But one cannot

help thinking that to have lived in Brittany eighty years ago, and especially to have spent one's childhood there, was to have occupied a very fortunate moment in time and space. The old lady, whose memories these are, was no doubt an aristocrat of aristocrats, and was surrounded with the most spacious advantages of dignity and wealth. But, for my own part, I can never resist the impression that the subordinate figures who filled up the picture enclosed by the majestic frame of the old *régime*, were, apart from horrible accidents and exceptions, very happy people. The folk-songs and carols they made bear witness to this. Arthur Young saw the peasants everywhere singing and dancing on the village greens as he went about France before the Revolution. Let me be quite fair and admit that in Miss Sedgwick's book there are disquieting hints here and there, darker shades in the delightful picture, acts of 'cruel severity,' presumably to peasants or servants, on the part of the old lady's grandfather, a most munificent and courtly old gentleman, M. de Rosval; the requirement, abolished

by her father, that the peasants should kneel before their masters, and especially some stories of the hardness of the peasants themselves to the old and sick. But the whole impression one gets is extraordinarily pleasant. The old *régime* was dead as a tyranny; indeed, the old world was gone altogether, but it had, as it were, projected a lovely mirage of itself that hung long in mid-air before it vanished away. I suspect the date of its final disappearance will be found to be 1914. But the years, say, from 1830 to 1870 must in Brittany have been a very felicitous time to have lived through. The great wars were over; the people of Europe were recovering the sanity natural to unperverted man. The evil day of Imperialism had not yet dawned, the old icebergs were disappearing in a warm current of liberal and humane ideas. It was, moreover, a time of incredible plenty—'incredible' is the word the narrator uses, and her descriptions sound incredible indeed in the meagre starveling time to which we have been brought by Imperialism and war. The Brittany of those days was a true *Cuccagna*,

the *pays de Cocagne*, that paradise of food and drink which floated before the imagination of the hungry Middle Ages, and for which there is a word in every European language. 'The land o' cakes,' I surmise, was a Scottish version of it; the old English form was 'the land of Cockayne.' By the way, is this the derivation of our 'cockney'—a native of that land of riches and abundance the countryman would imagine London to be? But hear the old lady's account of the table kept by Tante Rose, a great figure of her childish days, in her house at Landerneau :—

' Her *cuisine* was the best I have ever eaten, and oh! the incredible abundance of those days. The great silver soup tureen, big enough for a baby's bath, and so tall that she had to stand up to it, was in front of Aunt Rose, and before she began to ladle out the platefuls with the light, accurate movements of her arms characteristic of her, a servant carefully fastened up her long sleeves *à la pagode*. It was charming to see her serving the soup. . . . An enormous salmon usually occupied the centre of the table, and there were six *entrées*, four *rôtis*, two hot and two cold, and various *entremets* and desserts. A favourite *entrée* was a *purée* of pistachio nuts with roasted sheep's tails on silver spits stuck in it. The hot dishes were served on silver heaters filled with glowing charcoal. Between the courses little pots of cream, chocolate, vanilla and coffee were actually passed

A CHILDHOOD IN COCKAYNE

and actually eaten. Chocolate cream to fill up the gap between woodcock and *foie gras* ! Champagne in silver coolers stood at each corner of the table.'

'Any bishop who came to Landerneau,' we are told, 'stayed always with Tante Rose.' I should have liked to have stayed with Tante Rose myself.

Nor was this merely the selfish and heartless extravagance of an insolent few, but there was in the Brittany of that time, and indeed largely right up to the war, a very general diffusion of these good things. To quote another of these succulent descriptions (anybody who dislikes reading about food should be warned off this book), here is the account of the *déjeuner* at a very rustic, unpretentious inn :—

'The inn at Quimperlé was very primitive, the thatch showing through the rafters in the immense kitchen dining-room. We all sat down together at the long table, servants, coachman, postilion, and all, and the *déjeuner* served to us by the good landlady was fit to set before a king. I remember Maman asking her why she served the salmon and afterwards a heaping golden mound of fried potatoes on a great plank, and the landlady saying she had no dishes large enough. There was a turkey, too, stuffed with chestnuts, and, of course, *crêpes* and cream.'

The commercial travellers in the next room greeted each course as it appeared with hurrahs of joy. In those days the eggs and butter and cream of the country did not all go away to big towns; the people ate the fish of their own rivers, the game of their woods. The old world triumphed in the quantity and quality of its food, and apparently in the good-humour and cheerfulness of those whose lot it was to prepare it.

This last meal was on the journey which took the little girl to Paris, away from childhood and Brittany. One of her most cherished recollections of Brittany was of seeing the Pardon of Le Folgoët:—

‘Seventy-five years or more have passed since that day, and it still lives in my mind with a beauty more than splendid, a divine beauty. In the vast plain, under the vast blue sky, six bishops glittering with gold and precious stones celebrated mass simultaneously at six great altars amid thousands of worshippers. It was a sea of colour under the August sun, and the white coiffes of the women were like flocks of snowy doves.’

I myself saw the Pardon of Le Folgoët in the year 1908, and it was even then the most unforgettable sight it has ever been given my eyes to behold. The old lady is wrong,

A CHILDHOOD IN COCKAYNE

however, in saying it is held on August 15th, the day of the Assumption ; it takes place every year on the Nativity of Our Lady, September 8th. In 1908 it fell on a Sunday, a day of dazzling gold and blue. It may not be without interest to set down here the names of the chief Breton Pardons and their dates. They are St. Yves, at Le Minihy on May 19th ; Nôtre Dame de Rumengol, at the beginning of June ; St. Jean du Doigt, at Plougarnou on June 24th ; La Troménie de St. Ronan, at Locronan on the second Sunday in July ; Ste. Anne de la Palude on July 26th, and Nôtre Dame du Folgoët on September 8th. What will be the effect of the war on the Pardons ? Will they survive it ? I greatly fear for them.

‘ Brittany ’ and ‘ childhood ’ seem kindred terms. Brittany indeed is a child among lands, naïve, simple, sincere, artless, perhaps, as we have seen, a little greedy. Max Elscamp, the Flemish poet, seems to have felt this when he wrote :—

‘ I put all my trust in you
As they in Brittany and childhood do.’

This book of childhood is full of the most

OLD-WORLD ESSAYS

charming characters, children in heart themselves, or, at any rate, people out of fairy tales or children's books. There was *bonne maman* who never went out except on Easter Day, when she was carried to the cathedral of Quimper in a sedan chair painted with bunches of flowers and upholstered in copper-coloured satin, by four bearers in full Breton costume. There was the 'Tante Rose,' of whom we have already heard, who, dressed in a morning gown of puce-coloured silk, used to distribute milk for the poor of Lanterneau :—

'This is for Yann. This is for Hervé (an old cripple). Did this milk come from the yellow? It is sure then to be very good; take it to the Hospital, and—wait! This little jug of cream to the Supérieure—she is so fond of it. And, Laic, this large jar is for the prison.'

There were, again, the Demoiselles de Coatnamprun, two old maiden ladies in very modest circumstances, who 'in all their lives had never had an evil thought, who were incapable of any form of envy or malice or uncharitableness, filled with delight at any good fortune that came to others and with gratitude for their own lot,' and who

A CHILDHOOD IN COCKAYNE

were of such extreme simplicity that to the end of their days they believed that the Infant Jesus Himself came down the chimney and left their Christmas presents for them. But the most delightful figure in the book is that of the narrator's father, of whom the old lady has the fondest memories. He was a wealthy member of the *bourgeoisie*, who had married a lady of the *noblesse* when the gulf between the two classes was 'almost impassable,' a master of hounds, a lover of sport, of music, of all old things, and yet a Liberal, and a most humane and tender-hearted man. He used to carry his little daughter up and down and sing old Breton songs to her. One of these is thus translated: 'May Jesus be happy and may He make us all happy by His grace.' This seems a genuine bit of popular religion. It is surely very profound. The theological phrase 'the glory of God' in itself and in its true meaning is good, of course; but one knows the use that it has been so often put to. In comparison with this little song it seems harsh and sterile.

AN ITALIAN JOURNEY

IN one of his poems—I cannot at this moment remember which—Robert Browning speaks of his longing to be ‘on the better side of the great St. Gothard.’ From the context he evidently means ‘the Italian side.’ In my own opinion the description is an eminently just one. For my part I confess that the passage from the North to Italy by the St. Gothard road and tunnel has always exercised an unbounded fascination over me. I remember as a boy—it must have been in the late ‘seventies—my father’s enthusiasm at the time of the making of the tunnel. It seemed to him to serve the purposes of the great cause of human solidarity of which he had so catholic a vision. He used to talk about the clasp of the two hands—the strong practical German and the artistic sensitive Italian—as they met through the cleft mountain.

AN ITALIAN JOURNEY

I had been twice before to Italy by that lovely and majestic way. This year I had no very clear plans, as one morning of early September I took a ticket for Lugano at Charing Cross. Lugano, by the way, is, of course, not technically Italy, but for all practical purposes it may be looked upon as Italian. I was alone, and meant to talk to people, and look about and see things. The idea was to ramble about from village to village on the shores of the lake. I crossed that evening to Boulogne in a comfortably empty boat, and found myself a little later sharing the dining-car of the Bâle Express with one other passenger. This was a waiter from a London hotel, travelling homeward to his native village in Champagne. I quickly penetrated his mystery, and so I thought did the attendant who ministered to our needs. His conversation, which I found most instructive and illuminating, helped on the night, till in the small hours of the morning he left the train somewhere near the Swiss frontier. By insensible degrees we approached the central point of interest in the present European situation,

which, so at least it seems to me, is the question : Is Europe to continue Christian or not ? He set forth the anti-Christian side of the matter with great clearness and fairness. After a few criticisms in detail he came to the crucial point of the whole dispute : ‘ In England, yes, every one believe in God—in France they do not believe in Him so much. See here, we have to live in the world. I was taught by a good priest in the school ; in the morning for one hour we say prayers, then for one hour we learn the Bible. There is nothing in the Bible I do not know, he teach me everything about the Death of Jesus Christ. Then, just to turn over a little arithmetic or so, and in the afternoon we say the Rosary. Is it better to teach children so much about Christ, or to earn their bread in the world ? It is better to say nothing of Christ, but to teach the subjects of use. I never see God—but I know God in my conscience. I do no harm, to any one—if I can do good to any, I will.’ He then spoke very gently and quietly about the death of his sister’s young husband, and how he and his wife had taken their little girl. I listened

AN ITALIAN JOURNEY

and said very little. I confess I have always felt a considerable sympathy with the outraged upholders of the natural virtues who shouted down the Methodist preachers on eighteenth-century village greens. But, as I say, the man's artless talk exposed the whole European situation. On the Christian side, there are things that grate and jar, of course, but the main question is: Is the worship of Christ, is the thought of another world, mere waste of time? My friend had come to think so. As he left me I said I would come some day and lunch at his hotel, but he replied doubtfully that they could not serve a luncheon under five shillings.

Personally, I always find German Switzerland a very uninteresting country, given up to chocolate, condensed milk and slop-made clothes. But 'the better side' was reached at last, and those 'cheering and gracious aspects of Nature' of which Thackeray speaks, opened on my delighted eyes. I do not wonder that the story of St. Christopher is such a favourite with the people of this country. It seems the very landscape of that lovely tale. One would hardly be

surprised to see the Giant with his staff carrying the Child through these rushing mountain streams. How gloriously the fir-trees grow amid the St. Gothard rocks ! One likes to think that Turner saw them. How perfectly beautiful the vine-clad country about Faido is !

I reached Lugano that same evening. I stayed in the town itself, not in the cosmopolitan suburb misnamed 'Paradiso.' In the arcaded streets you are at last in the South, the whole atmosphere is Italian. It is almost the true south of the brigands and cicale. My first thought was to buy Fogazzaro's *Piccolo Mondo Antico*, of which the scene is laid in the Lugano lake-side villages, intending to use it as a kind of guide-book, reading it as I rambled about. The little ancient world of this book appears to have been an extraordinarily peaceful and restful one. It certainly lay on the better side of the mountain which divides us from it. Here is a passage, for example, about the tarocchi, the game of cards which all the characters in the book play from morning till night :—

AN ITALIAN JOURNEY

'The Kings and Queens of tarocchi, the World, the Madman, and the Bauble, were in that time and that country, personages of importance, minute powers benevolently tolerated in the bosom of the great silent Empire of Austria, where their enmities, their alliances, their wars, were the only political argument which could be freely discussed.' Was not this the most harmless kind of politics possible? There is an old Venetian in the book, who always talked in his native patois, and seems to have been like the Abbot Joachim 'di spirito profetico dotato.' He used to say 'I was born under St. Mark, a great Saint; I have seen the French, good people; I now see the Germans, let them stay; scoundrels will come after them.' The soft Venetian syllables themselves breathe a tranquil old-world philosophy: 'gran Santo,' 'bona zente,' 'lassemo star.' This little ancient lake-side world was much more given to contemplation than the noisy hurrying world of to-day. Fogazzaro speaks of two most ancient and luxuriant trees—now, alas! no more—existing in the lake villages of that time, a huge

jasmine at Oria, which the hero of the book cuts down, and a great beech-tree, sacred to the Madonna, with her venerated image hanging in it. It is a world in which—so at least one fancies—one could have lived very happily indeed.

One should have come to the Italian lakes, say, at four and twenty, as one of a party of four young men. There should have been a botanist, a linguist, a painter and a Catholic. Spring is of course the time of wild flowers, but even in autumn the botanist could have an endless feast in the gentians and wild pinks, the cyclamens, the Michaelmas daisies, the rare blue periwinkle stars still found here and there, the ferns and shamrocks breaking through every cranny and crevice of the stone steps and walls. What crooked, crazy places they are, the old-world lake-side villages, Ponte Tresa, Morcote, Albogasio, Oria, Gandria, San Mamette! How many steps there are at Morcote I am afraid to say—it is all stone steps and cypresses. Going up and down these steps I came upon a really lovely Annunciation, when painted and by whom I know not, but after a

AN ITALIAN JOURNEY

thousand Annunciations, this bit of fading fresco arrested me at once. Gandria appears to me a village impossible to describe, just as I confess I found it impossible to explore. There are no English words to give the sense of its higgledy-piggledy topsyturviness, so extraordinarily delightful to a dweller in the Fens, but I think it can be rendered by these Italian ones 'un dedaluccio di vicoletti.' I remember, by the way, an English November day, in which the model village was lost in fog and mud, being exceedingly cheered and comforted by these words. There is, moreover, at Gandria still standing a giant fig-tree worthy to rank with the vanished jasmine of Oria, and the beech-tree of the Madonna. Of all the villages I think I enjoyed Ponte Tresa the most. I walked out a little into the country, and sat upon an alp as on a throne in the sweet meadow grass starred with crocuses in the delightful quiet and peace only broken by the shrill cries of the cicale. Nor shall I soon forget the scene I came across one morning in the church at Oria. How Italians enjoy themselves in church—how

much at home they are ! Here was the whole population gathered together, the old men standing about in easy attitudes, the women in bright-coloured shawls, the babies sprawling on the floor. They were singing with indescribable fervour the Litany of the Saints. One felt encompassed by the cloud of witnesses, and very much at ease and happy in their company.

The theologian of our imaginary party of young men would have been greatly edified at Lugano by his morning conversations with the barber. This very sympathetic youth was a kind of Christian counterpart of the anti-clerical waiter whom I met in the train. On the morning of the Nativity of Our Lady I happened to ask something about the festa ! He explained that in Ticino it was not a day of obligation—‘ non è festa di precetto ’—although in Italy it was. It was then my turn to be asked a question, ‘ cosa adorano i Protestanti ? ’ he inquired. To this there was but one possible reply, so of course I said ‘ Dio.’ ‘ Dio Uomo ? ’ he interrogated, pursuing the investigation, and again I replied ‘ Si.’ This assurance appeared

AN ITALIAN JOURNEY

to give him great satisfaction. 'E piu giusto,' he observed—it is more reasonable, proper, meet, right and our bounden duty. He then went on to give a very lucid account of the doctrine of the Incarnation. 'Dio Spirito s'è fatto Uomo.' He spoke very devoutly of the Madonna, whose day it was; 'ha molto patita à piè della Croce' he said, adding, however, with a kind of prudent reserve which I imagine is very Italian, 'secondo tutte quelle storie là' ! He said that all the Ticinese were Catholics—there were many Socialists, 'ma anche i Socialisti son Cattolici.' I sincerely hope it is so.

I cannot help thinking that a certain truly enlightened Christianity, a doctrine of the love of our neighbour and the love of God, founded upon and made possible by the Incarnation, may be looked upon as peculiarly the North Italian doctrine. It is the doctrine of Manzoni, Silvio Pellico and Fogazzaro. I thought of 'I Mici Prigioni,' and the lovely poem

' Il Signor, che di gloria sfavillante
Regna nei cieli, e sua delizia è pure
Il picciol uomo in questa valle errante.'

‘I prayed to God,’ he says, ‘to God made man and experienced in all human sorrow.’ This was no doubt the teaching that they heard as boys, from the lips of priests long dead, the *pievani* of their poor *paesi*, Manzoni and Silvio Pellico, and Fogazzaro. At any rate it is the teaching that I heard on Sunday at the ‘*spiegazione del Vangelo*’ at Mass in the Cathedral at Lugano. The Gospel was that of the question, ‘Which is the great Commandment?’ The preacher pursued a train of thought very familiar to myself, in fact he preached the sermon which I, so to speak, habitually sit under at home. I liked the dramatic gesture with which he dismissed the discomfited Pharisees—‘*e buon giorno i Farisei.*’ For my own part this is the teaching I would like to keep for Europe. Coming out of the church into the piazza overlooking the lake I saw a marvellous thing. It was no advertised performance, but just as one might meet a motor-car on the road, or for the matter of that, see a dragon-fly or a swallow skimming about in the air high up in the sky, there floated over the lake an aeroplane. Possibly in a few years’

AN ITALIAN JOURNEY

time such a sight will move us to no special wonder. Armies of completely secularized waiters from the Carlton and the Ritz, from their youth up undistracted from the pursuit of wealth by either Passio or Vangelo, may descend in their own aeroplanes upon their native villages in Piedmont and Savoy. But one hopes that even if the mould and form of thought should again become Pagan, at any rate its content and substance may still be Christian.

That same afternoon I remember I went up Monte Brè by the funicular railway. With a merry Italian party I botanized on the mountain and descended to the village of Brè. We rambled through the crooked streets under the leadership of a very bright youth, who made love to the old ladies of the village, to say nothing of the young ones, and seemed a favourite with everybody. In the church there was the same popular, familiar kind of scene going on as at Oria. We all kissed a very sacred relic—a portion of the veil of the Madonna, after which a young woman repeated aloud vernacular prayers. A critic might object that if we

had the Faith in the morning we had superstition in the afternoon. The Rationalist objection to relics, by the way, has always seemed to me particularly shallow. Dr. Newman, for instance, in one of his letters from Italy, speaks of a relic of the blood of some martyr which is said to liquefy when a piece of the true Cross is brought near it. The *Daily News* reviewer described this as very painful reading ! But given what all Christians believe, it is surely not an unreasonable or unnatural thing to suppose that the presence of the instrument of the Atonement should have some sort of effect upon even the dead bodies of the Redeemed. We are too dogmatic about the senselessness and lifelessness of inanimate things. Does not the rod bend in the diviner's hand as the water rises beneath the earth, and wood and water salute each other ? It may be that the Blood of Abel crying from the ground is not a metaphor, but a fact. Who knows but that the very stones do indeed cry out ?

Many delightful little journeys may be made from Lugano. I went up Monte Generoso twice, as the first time the fog came

down upon us and shut out the view. As the white mist parted and drifted, however, the brief glimpses that one got were almost more lovely than the whole scene in brilliant sunshine. Personally, I prefer the view from Monte San Salvatore. I have sometimes meditated writing a chapter on 'Sacred Mountains.' Of all holy hills there is surely none more lovely than that mountain of the Saviour that rises above Lugano. From it one sees the whole panorama of Central Europe, Monte Rosa, the lakes of Lugano, Maggiore, and Como. The altar of the chapel on the summit is surmounted by a representation of the Resurrection. It keeps watch over the mountains and the lakes, the everlasting snows, the three times sacred waters and woods of Europe. It is worth while again going to Luino, if only for the sake of the exquisitely lovely country one passes through to come to it. There can be no landscape in the world like it.

From Lugano I went to Milan. Here my first pilgrimage, before even going to the Duomo, was to that church of churches—to my own mind the most dear and beautiful

of all the churches in Christendom—Sant Ambrogio. I think there is no building anywhere so Christian, so filled with the spirit of the earliest Church. There is, by the way, a very early figure of our Lord, very grave and dignified, with the beautiful inscription, 'Bonus Amicus Tavernarius.' We say 'the Good Shepherd' and the like, why should we not say 'the Good Innkeeper'? The attendants were vague about it. The ostiarius who showed me the church said that it represented a hermit. I appealed to a priest, who set him right, but with whom I myself became involved in a dispute arising out of the matter, on the Parable of the Good Samaritan. I attempted to give him the mystical explanation, but he would not hear of it, and said the parable was intended to teach us the love of our neighbours. This appeared to me to savour of the atmosphere of an English Council School.

They kept Holy Cross Day with great pomp at Milan. I fear the reader may think this a very ecclesiastical journey, but I spent the morning of my Sunday at Milan in the Duomo, and the afternoon at Sant Ambrogio.

AN ITALIAN JOURNEY

The Ambrosian Mass is a rite of extraordinary stateliness and dignity. I remember twenty years ago at Airolo a priest explaining to me how it differed from the Roman rite. The censer, for instance, is swung in great circles, not merely up and down. A great feature is the reading or singing of the Lections, the Prophecy, Epistle and two Gospels with much state and ceremony from the Ambo. (The Holy Cross Gospel at Milan, by the way, was the Queen of the South coming to hear the wisdom of Solomon.) No bell was rung during the Mass, but six huge tapers were brought in for the Elevation. In the afternoon I sat in Sant Ambrogio, amid a class of men mostly apparently small shopkeepers and the like, and received instruction in Christian Doctrine from a priest. He expounded the Lord's Prayer to us very sensibly and well. 'All men pray,' he told us, 'the Jews pray in their synagogues, the Turks pray in their mosques, the Protestants pray in their Gothic temples.' The church was then invaded by a party of processionists, belonging to some Catholic Association, going from Station to Station,

singing hymns of a very Salvationist kind—
'io son Cristiano,' and the like—with great
fervour. I walked with them to their next
Station, the Church of San Vittore. They
were fervidly devout, but rather more
hilarious and convivial than we expect the
devout to be in England.

After Sant Ambrogio I think the thing
that pleased me most at Milan was the series
of drawings by Albert Dürer, in the Brera
Gallery, illustrating the life of the Virgin.
I confess I had never before realized what a
very great artist Dürer was. The attendant
who exhibited the gallery to visitors appeared
to take an unbounded delight in these draw-
ings. He pointed out their beauties with
great minuteness of detail. 'Che fantasia,'
was his ever-repeated refrain, 'ma, un
artista.' In that delightful quality of
'fantasy,' indeed, they excel anything I
ever remember to have seen. Under what
glorious flames of sun and star, amid what
blossoming trees, what rocks and towers and
towns does the Sacred Story move! Why
did the faculty of taking delight in the sights
of the world, and of imparting that delight

AN ITALIAN JOURNEY

to others, die out of the human mind in the middle of the sixteenth century? It seems to have reached its height in Albrecht Dürer. Speaking for myself, 'delight' is the word for the effect produced upon my mind by the old ballads like 'Sir Patrick Spens' or the pictures of Luini, of Carpaccio, of Hans Memling, or by these drawings of Albrecht Dürer. Then, save for the colours of a few Venetians, I delight in no work of man again till the 'Lyrical Ballads' and Turner. What delight is there, for instance, in Michael Angelo or Leonardo? Humour, pity, terror, curiosity, admiration, interest, speculation, yes, but not delight. Who can take delight, pure, unmixed, ecstatic joy, in Shakespeare's Sonnets, or anything of Milton's? Who can delight in Rubens? But joy came in again when the Ancient Mariner was shriven, and all homely, heavenly things.

'A household tub like one of those
That women use to wash their clothes,
This carried the blind boy.'

How very good that is! There is the bush, so to speak—what we need is first to get the real living, growing bush, then at any

time the transfiguring moment may come, and the bush be all on fire. Albrecht Dürer's bushes positively flame. The work of a too-little-known artist of our own time, by the way, Mr. Godfrey Blount, seems to me filled with the same lovely spirit of fantasy as Dürer's. I found the old gentleman in charge of the pictures delightfully sympathetic. He was highly pleased at my suggesting that a picture officially described as by Basaiti was probably German. A very frequent subject of old pictures is the Parting of Mary with her Son before the Passion. In a rather thoughtless moment I asked him if a certain painting was the first Apparition after the Resurrection. He pointed to the Hands, in which there were no Stigmata. This little gesture lit up for me the familiarity with and vivid realization of the Sacred Story which comes to people from constantly seeing such things. Altogether I found Milan a very pleasant city. The penny toys sold in the streets surpassed in variety and amusingness those of any town known to me. A shop for the repairing of damaged dolls spoke of the frugal Italian kindness.

AN ITALIAN JOURNEY

The Italians, indeed, of all classes are charming people. The waiter at the very modest inn at which I stayed had an extraordinary power of throwing a perfect unction and rhythm of sympathy into his voice. He could disarm and reconcile. For instance, putting before me a dish of jugged hare, which as it happened was stone-cold, he exclaimed with a soothing intonation, dwelling on each syllable with a kind of affectionate solicitude, 'Pi-atto cál-do.' At Varallo, again, two waiters vied with one another in the tones of heartfelt interest in which they endeavoured to explain the nature of a chamois, a dish of which animal they were offering me. One said it was 'a kind of hare,' the other 'a kind of fox.' Be that as it may, its flesh is a viand of a very undesirable kind.

On setting out on this Italian journey I had resolved not to come home again without seeing the Sacro Monte at Varallo, which I had for years desired to see. As one approaches Varallo the mountain country is of indescribable loveliness. When I got there it was dark and raining. In answer to the usual clamour of the names of various hotels

I somewhat rashly said 'Albergo Sacro Monte,' not realizing that this involved a quarter of an hour's stiff climb in the wet and dark. The porter cheered my way with the story of an English lady who in making the ascent had 'sweated all the water in her body'—'ma era una grossa.' After the brief endless climb we reached the modest comfortable house, where I found an excellent supper and bed. The two fresh trout in their dish with a green sprig of sage looked as if they had come from a picture of the Last Supper. By each plate lay a pile of grissini, the long thin sticks of paste, which in Piedmont are eaten as bread. There is something very fascinating in the demolition of a pile of these crisp sticks. The grissini of Varallo were all very well, the waiter said, but they should taste those of Novara who would know what grissini really were. They were *buonissimi*. There is a never-failing interest about bread in all its forms. I remember seeing an exuberant young couple fence with the bread, the long French loaves in a Soho restaurant. This was an original use to which to put

AN ITALIAN JOURNEY

the staff of life. How truly bread is the staff of life is shown by the Italian word 'Companatico,' for meat or any other kind of food, that which one eats with the bread, the sauce to the bread. The German equivalent, by the way, is 'Zugemüse,' that which one eats with the vegetables. The next morning I started with Butler's *Alps and Sanctuaries* as a guide, to explore the forty-four chapels of the Holy Mountain. Each chapel contains a group of sculpture representing some scene in the Life of Our Lord. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries it was a great place of pilgrimage—a perpetual holy fair was always going on there. People with various ills distressed came to some one or other of the chapels which had some special reference to their case—the paralytic, for instance, would be brought to the Chapel of the Healing of the Man Sick of the Palsy—while at the Chapels of the Passion all graces and blessings were to be obtained. There are still hanging a few votive pictures here and there. The tide of devotion has long since receded from Varallo and set in the

OLD-WORLD ESSAYS

direction of newer and more fashionable shrines, but I saw many family parties of Italians of the humbler classes making the round of the chapels—a happy little journey that seemed half picnic and half pilgrimage. They knelt a minute or two in front of each group and on rising made the Sign of the Cross. Here and there one of these family groups, say a white-haired old woman, her son and his wife and a baby, had unpacked their basket on the steps in front of a chapel, and sat drinking red wine, and eating sausages and figs and grissini. The groups of sculpture are full of beauty and interest. A girl guide showed visitors all over the mountain, reciting the whole gospel story as she did so. There is something very pleasant in thinking of the Story living on on this mountain, inhabiting it, as it were, not only represented, but continually recited and proclaimed there by the lips of the childlike and the simple every day. At Varallo the feeling was strong upon me that the people are still Christian. Butler learnedly discusses every group of sculpture. He grows positively lyrical over certain figures, notably

AN ITALIAN JOURNEY

over a little old man known as 'il Vechietto,' who is gazing up at the Descent from the Cross. Of the Crucifixion group he says it is the greatest achievement ever accomplished by even Italian Art.

I spent three days at Varallo, walking about the Holy Mountain and the lovely St. Christopher country. The town itself is charming, with its Italian colour and quaint street scenes. I particularly liked the poulterers' shops with squirrels and martens hanging up in them. There is a church—I forget its name—with lovely frescoes by Gaudenzio Ferrari.

The last station of my journey was Varese. Here also, rising above the town, is a Sacred Mountain. The chapels contain representations of the Mysteries of the Rosary. There are, however, only fourteen of them. I have no words to describe the holy pleasantness of the scene, with the good-humoured holiday people going from chapel to chapel in the golden autumn weather, with the glorious mountain scenery all about. The views are very beautiful. Varese was the most thoroughly Italian place I saw. From the

OLD-WORLD ESSAYS

noisy, bustling street one turns into a spacious calm piazza in front of a church with the inscription on its façade, 'Divo Victori Martyri Patrono.' In this church on the Sunday I was in the town I chanced on a young priest's first Mass. An announcement set forth that on this day our fellow-citizen Don So-and-so would offer the 'incruento Sacrificio' for the first time. His mother occupied a place of honour in front of the altar. A few intimates, including myself, sat immediately behind her. 'Gente invitata' said the Sacristan, protecting us and warding off the mob. At the conclusion of the Mass the mother profusely kissed the assistants. In the afternoon, I went to the races, but for my own part, I confess I generally find the amusements of the world extremely dull. The races appeared to consist mainly of immense intervals in which we wandered listlessly about the field. At dinner that evening the waiter wore an extremely chastened, almost tearful expression. He confided to me that he had lost a hundred and twenty-five lire. 'Molto sfortunato' he murmured, 'Alla lunga' he said sadly, 'si perde sempre.'

51395

199

225

269

274

327

112 Westerns Hapth. - Pigeon Ry 4

117 Musker

144 Persentum

161 Hister & 1/2

228 'harm' per

246 'ow' Appomox

282 Oer

291 Sandman

314 to stamit

321 Duke Helian religion

328 'Delight'

UC SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY



A 000 676 953 3

